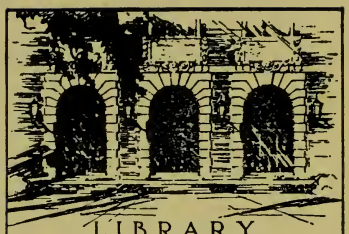

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THE WATERS OF MARAH.

THE WATERS OF MARAH.

A Novel.

BY

JOHN HILL.

Farewell and adieu!
Each year that we live shall we sing it anew
With a water untravelled before us for sailing,
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1883.
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CONTENTS.

Part the Fifth.—Marriage and Death and Division.

(*Continued.*)

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

THATCHER'S 3

CHAPTER V.

VERSATA URNA 20

Part the Sixth.—The Spread Net.

CHAPTER I.

"I DON'T CARE" 39

CHAPTER II.

GEORGE HOLDS TWO CONSULTATIONS 62

CHAPTER III.

PAGE

LILY SENDS HER INVOICE 82

CHAPTER IV.

LILY LEADS THE WAY 96

CHAPTER V.

THE WAY LILY LED 116

CHAPTER VI.

"EXPERIMENTUM IN CORPORE VILI" 145

Part the Seventh.—The Net Gathered In.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE SKELTON STREET 171

CHAPTER II.

"THIS HOUSE IS MINE!" 199

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BRANDON'S VISITORS 217

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

"HE'S NOT SAFE!" 235

CHAPTER V.

SCHLANGENBERG 245

CHAPTER III.

PAGE
LILY SENDS HER INVOICE 82

CHAPTER IV.

LILY LEADS THE WAY 96

CHAPTER V.

THE WAY LILY LED 116

CHAPTER VI.

"EXPERIMENTUM IN CORPORE VILI" 145

Part the Seventh.—The Net Gathered In.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE SKELTON STREET 171

CHAPTER II.

"THIS HOUSE IS MINE!" 199

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BRANDON'S VISITORS 217

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

"HE'S NOT SAFE!" 235

CHAPTER V.

SCHLANGENBERG 245

THE WATERS OF MARAH.

Part the Fifth.

(*Continued.*)

MARRIAGE AND DEATH AND DIVISION.

THE WATERS OF MARAH.

CHAPTER IV.

THATCHER'S.

There is a rather small hotel in one of the streets running westward from Bond Street, labelled Private, for reasons best known to the proprietor. It is called Thatcher's Hotel. Of course, Thatcher was and is not, but has gone to join the highly-respectable fellowship of defunct hotel-keepers in the upper room (labelled Private) of some Elysian public-house. The name of the present occupier is Limbick, and he was once chief butler to a duke. Notwithstanding this potent fact

in his favour, the tradition of the primeval name carries a certain glamour with it, which Limbick felt his own would fail to cast on the generations whose ancestors had handed down to them recommendations of "Thatcher's." Even now people said: "I don't know who manages the place *now;* all I can say is, it *used* to be very good."

It had none of the garishness or meretricious architectural attractions of your modern great institutions, carried on, as it were, by machinery under an anonymous company. There was no eternally "pinging" electric-bell, or swift silent elevator at Thatcher's. If you wanted to ring a bell, you applied your weight to the end of a green rope and waited. If you wanted to go upstairs, Thatcher was not going to encourage the luxurious tendencies of an effete civilisation by propelling you up a shaft.

The entrance-hall was panelled, the stair-

rail was wooden, solid, and wide, and the floors and stairs a trifle to the right or left of the plane of the horizon. At the door an elderly waiter perpetually posed, and treated you with the familiar deference of an old family servant—utterly different from the modern pallid, low-necked, fee-hungering foreigner, who is either supremely supercilious or abjectly servile.

A sort of square pulpit in the front hall, where a porter sorted perpetual letters and read the afternoon paper, gave the place almost the air of a club.

The chambermaids were elderly — distinctly elderly—the colouring of the house was sombre, and the passages smelt faintly of old upholstery and simmering mutton-chops. The bill of fare was limited. You might have steaks, chops, "joint," fowl, thick ox-tail, mock-turtle soup, and fried sole; and there was a large cavernous inexhaustible

cheese, which stood as a decoration on the real mahogany sideboard of the coffee-room. Folk-lore said that the late Thatcher was performing in the way Jacques du Bois describes in the nurse's arms when that old cheese was new. In fact, it was an old-established family hotel, where the worth of your money, not conspicuously laid out in entertainment, was exhausted in keeping up the intense respectability of the house.

In a private sitting-room upstairs, adorned with a gilt mantel-piece mirror, a stamped crimson baize wall-paper, four large prints of "The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher," "The Trial of Charles I.," "The First Meeting of the Royal Academy," and Wilkie's "John Knox Preaching," there sits in the window, watching the street, with a current number of *The Lamp* on her knees, a girl apparently waiting to go out of doors, for she has on a black hat, and a bronze-green velvet

jacket-body over her gray-green dress. She is a very dainty and fragile small beauty, who had now almost ceased to be startled when addressed as Mrs. Farringdon.

It was March, and they had been here several days, principally that Dick might behold all and reap some of the advantages of London life—from her husband's point of view. That gentleman had been out since their rather late breakfast. He had to go to his bootmaker's, he said, and he had not come back yet, and it was near lunch-time, and they were to go out immediately after lunch.

Dick had read all the paragraphs concerning the movements, and stud or yacht purchases of what the French like to call "the high life," as well as a great deal of quaint information from competent authorities concerning people, things, and theatres, which conveyed little information to her.

And between the paragraphs she had tried

to think over the curious experiences of her first few months of married life—of the Mediterranean pleasure-towns, and of the successive days which seemed to mark themselves only by successive breakfasts, luncheons, walks, drives, dinners, and novel-reading, with no great and distinguishing accent or variation, no particular thing done, said, or heard worth remembering. But what was to be seen did not depend on the variations of human habits and temperament. The sea, and sky, and sunlight remained in their perfect beauty the same, whether gazed upon by cosmopolitan gamblers or by English wedding tourists. She and George had been the night before to a theatre, and to another the night before that. Dick had been a little amused, a good deal puzzled, and somewhat surprised. George had explained to her that certain speeches were witty, because they referred to some town-slang

phrase of the day. He had been rather "gravelled," to use a Shakespearean term, by her asking him why he laughed so much at certain jests on the stage which bore to her no meaning. She asked him if there was not just then a version of "Hamlet" being rather remarkably performed in London. George suddenly recollected that there was, saying:

"Would you like to go? Lots of people do go. It's one of the things to have seen, I fancy."

There had gradually appeared between them an increasing lack of common and sympathetic topics of conversation. It had narrowed down almost to the statement by him of facts picked up from acquaintances and from the papers, and occasional *facetiæ* of an imperfectly humorous kind. George did not seem to notice and observe many things until his wife called his attention to

them. He would then assume the critical attitude. She had detected him more than once using a phrase from a newspaper paragraph as his own spontaneous wit. Then occasional friends of George's would appear, old Oxford acquaintances from his club, and the like, who talked a kind of solemn supercilious *argot*, in which well-known social names, theatres, the various entertainments given in and by that microscopic fraction of the community which they called Our Set, and themselves, and their movements, their health, or their plentiful lack of it, and their favourite beverages would be curiously intermixed.

The favourite topic of George's friends was one of themselves in his absence. Perhaps one of them might fancy himself to be gifted with a sense of humour or mimicry, and imitate well-known actors, or, still more preferably, music-hall artists, and

then say, with a kind of heavy good-nature, mixed with a dash of remorse: "But I'm afraid you don't care for this sort of thing, Mrs. Farringdon?" to the patient little lady who tried to be kind and sympathetic with these impossible self-centred young *poseurs*, because to her, if not to him, they were George's old friends.

But she had now lived in the intimacy of marriage with George for several months, and had found out, vaguely and gradually, a good deal. She had found that the friction of every-day life removed that external garniture of borrowed wit, that admired faculty of criticism and artistic conversation that raised her husband so far above the mixture of bluntness and sordidness of her family circle. In fact, George Farringdon was common-place, good-natured when he had his own way, and not always thoroughly and lucidly honest. It was very hard; but

Dick had to let these convictions course through her soul "like iron through her blood." Could she admit to herself the next horrible idea, thought she, as she sat in that upper window of Thatcher's Hotel, with *The Lamp* in her lap—namely, that her marriage was a great mistake, which her parents, her circumstances, her ignorance, and her dutifulness had hurried her into?

Could disobedient independence have produced a better state of things? Questions too hard almost for a nineteen-year-old bride to ask herself. And far harder for her to hear the answers to them out of the abyss where truth conceals itself until it is too late to be aught but food for regret. For those answers reiterated themselves more distinctly from day to day, whenever a meal was taken or an hour or so passed in the company of George Malcolm Farringdon.

At last he came in; neat, short-haired,

well-washed, and slightly scented, perfectly gloved (three buttons), a white lily-of-the-valley bouquet, with maidenhair fern, in his coat. His clothes were quiet in colour, defied criticism in fit, and were a model of the latest cut made fashionable by his tailor. He had a cigarette in his mouth, and looked young, delicate, and what might be called pretty. He put his hat and umbrella on the table, and said cheerfully :

" Well, Dick, how have you been getting on ? "

" Oh, I don't know. I have been reading and looking at the people who passed. What did you do ? "

" Well, I went down to that fellow in the Haymarket, you know, and gave it to him hot about those boots. He says he'll make it all right, and the best of it is he won't charge. The fellow saw he hadn't a leg to stand on with me. Then I went

down the Strand to get a couple of stalls for that Shakespeare thing you wanted to go to."

"Thanks for remembering that."

"And while I was there I thought I'd look in at the Thespian Restaurant. I don't like it so well as the Prætorium, because you meet such infernal cads there—nothing but actors and literary characters on the loaf. Saw one decent fellow there, though, a man who gives valuable tips on certain events. I must thank him for the way he put me through that Manchester."

"What's that?"

"Equine contest, dear—race."

"Do you like betting?"

"No, not particularly. Never run the chance of losing much—not such a fool; but it is good form to know a little about those things."

"What is 'good form,' dear? You know

you promised to explain all the things in which my education was deficient."

"Now I wonder if you are trying to be witty, little woman?"

"I don't see anything to be witty about. I just asked."

"Good form is doing what other fellows do, who know how the thing should be done."

"And how do they know better than you?"

"Well, I don't say they do. But it is a subtle kind of thing. Every fellow who is a gentleman born knows what it means. It is good form to pay your debts of honour, to dress properly, to know the right people, and to talk about the right things. Well, then, I was going to tell you, in there I met your old friend with the black hair and the shaven face, the Hebraistic person, you remember, who was with Deane at Schlangenberg."

"I remember."

"And he was good enough to offer me a couple of stalls for the first night of the new Shakespeare play, which had been given to him. He gets in as a critic or something. He's not half a bad fellow."

"I don't think he is at all a bad fellow. Did you take them?"

"Rather! Never refuse a good offer."

"But he won't be able to go himself, now."

"Oh, he doesn't mind that. He can easily go some other time, I suppose. Well, then I took a hansom, had a row with the driver about sixpence—ended in my giving him a drink; went to the club, where I found Crawshay—you remember Algy Crawshay: you've met him, old Magdalen man. He's dropped an awful lot on the Manchester. He was infatuated enough not to take my advice. Always told him what to do. He's no

definite prospects, and I don't believe that mother of his lets him have much—or has much to give him. The late baronet chucked most of what he had on all sorts of things —horses, ladies of the ballet, and Lord knows what other iniquitous extravagances."

"I am sorry for his mother, if he goes on losing her money. Is that good form too?"

"Well, he's a very good fellow, anyhow. Always was an awfully popular man. I say, you mustn't think you can understand the instincts and intricacies of a man's life quite yet, or we shall have you writing a romance of the nineteenth century, or Society paragraphs in Westerdijk's paper, or something."

"I don't think I do understand men's life here quite yet. But, George, haven't you any friends who do something? Something besides talking at the club, and buying clothes and boots, and betting on horse-races?"

"Well, most of my pals are like me, too well off to need to do anything. There's Deane—not that he crosses my path much—he does an awful lot in his own line, I believe, and gets prizes and things; and doubtless is now making scientific discoveries, and benefiting the human race in some Smithfield slum. It's quite right of him, and he's got his money to earn; but I shouldn't like it if I weren't obliged to do it. Then there's this man Rosenfeld, great pal of Deane's, who wears seedy clothes and writes things. Well, he may be very clever; but he looks an awful scarecrow, and I shouldn't think he could invariably pay ready for his dinner. Well, that isn't at all good form, you know."

"Can't a poor man be good form?"

"Well, he can, I suppose. But I'm shot if I see how. I wish you wouldn't pelt me with those unhappy words."

"Well, I won't any more."

A knock came at the door, and the ancient family retainer brought in a telegram. It was from the Sokebridge doctor, and ran:

"Your father in very critical state. May not last. Better come."

"Goodness!" remarked George. "I wonder what we had better do?"

"Go there, of course. I suppose they have time-tables in the house?"

"Well, I suppose we had. But we shall miss the use of those theatre tickets. However, that will be more loss to you than to me, perhaps, as I don't care about the way they do Shakespeare now."

What way Mr. Farringdon did prefer he did not stop to explain, but went to inquire about trains.

They started for Sokebridge rather late that afternoon.

CHAPTER V.

VERSATA URNA.

The stars blazed in the still spring night above the silent black mass of the old house at Sokebridge. There was no light anywhere save in one window, whence a dull yellow radiance filtering out on either side the opaque blind signified that some watch was kept in that house. It was early morning. In perhaps half-an-hour one might expect to see another kind of yellow radiance develop,

> And flaky darkness break within the east.

But there was one in that house, in that candle-lit room, who had seen his last dawn, ay, and his last daylight, too, for the Night

had taken him to herself for ever. He had not even had the privilege of warning or amusing those he left behind by carefully selected or spasmodic and spontaneous "last words." For he had died speechless and powerless. The slow relentless destruction that had long hung over him, like the axe of the guillotine, had fallen at last.

Jessica alone had ministered to him and seen him die. George and Dick arrived only in time to see the corpse of Claudius Farringdon. And a very dandified corpse it was — well shaven, and possessing waxed moustaches.

Dick had long ago gone to bed, tired, sad, and shocked through her whole nervous system. She had never seen a dead man before; and it seemed to her, who knew not how long the sepulchre had been building, that the end was awfully sudden.

George was standing before the great

coal-fire in the library, which had warmed his father's long watches on many a winter night. There lingered yet here, in Claudius's sanctuary, a faint mixture of subtle scents and choice tobacco. They were the only souls he left behind to haunt the place. The shutters were shut.

Nestling in one of the deep lounging-chairs before him sat Jessica. In this very serious moment of time, when the house was hushed, and half the county round anxious, silent, and solemn, when the life of the man who had been more important than aught else in her history had just flickered down like an oilless lamp upstairs, her first instinct was to make herself as comfortable as possible. George had his hands in his pockets, and looked puzzled and gloomy.

"What were the last things he said, Mrs. Brandon, when he could speak or write?" he asked.

"He gave directions that the vicar should not be called in, saying that as he had an aversion to being bored all his life, it would be hard to be bored now, when he could not help himself. Then he said: 'The house and books will be George's, though I don't suppose he'll care to read them.' Later he said: 'I don't want any interesting fictions inscribed on a tombstone about the number of my virtues and the people who will weep for me. In fact, I don't care twopence where you put my carcase, or what you put over it.' The last thing he did was to look at me and repeat:

> "You're a fair viol, and your sense the strings;
> Good sooth, I care not for you!"

"Quotation was one of his strong points, gratitude was not."

There ensued a few minutes of silence, at the end of which Jessica said:

"I suppose you were not much pleased to find me here?"

George looked at her. He had never had a solitary conversation with this curious lady before in his recollection, nor had he ever studied her appearance minutely. On previous occasions his mind and hers had been full of other things. The rise and fall of the flame-light was on her face—the best light it could be seen in for artistic effect. The fire was the foot-lights; George was the audience, coldly inclined towards the play, but curious to know more of it, in spite of all *à priori* canons of criticism.

A great deal depended on Jessica's skilful dealing here, in her mind at least. It was true that one part of her scheme had been accomplished through the aid of the skilful and trustworthy man, Westerdijk; but, being a woman, it was not satisfactory to her that a scheme of which she desired the accom-

plishment should be controlled by anyone but herself. She had quite set out on her course now, and was a purposeful and skilful woman. She had sold herself to the devil, in antique parlance, in an hour of savage misery, and meant to have her money's worth of the bargain. She calculated on all but two things; first, the fact that she was a woman, and that, therefore, her emotions, however strong at starting, were not certain to be persistent through all time, and might possibly leave her in a very awkward predicament by changing, some fine day, in the sudden and apparently causeless way peculiar to emotions when they alone occupy the place of motives.

The other contingency she had not calculated on was the failure of her own personal fascination to have its due and customary effect. In neglecting this possibility she was certainly justified by experience, by her looking-glass,

and by her knowledge of the kind of creature her powers were to be exercised on. Her present task was to make peace with the young heir, to convert that rather provoking assumption of cold moral superiority, which sat so well on George, into a more friendly familiarity—no more.

"You did not expect to see me, I suppose?" she added, her first question failing to elicit a definite answer.

"Well, I can't say I was surprised. Of course I knew what ties—I mean I knew your expectation that—at least I took it for granted."

"My expectation that—what? If I may ask, Mr. George Farringdon, who will shortly be Mr. Farringdon without the George, what did you take for granted?"

"If you will have it, I took for granted you would come to look after your own interests—as I have no doubt you have."

"Where the carcase is, etc. And I am the ideal vulture, in your mind's eye?"

"I must ask you to speak respectfully of my father, whether he is alive or dead, please, Mrs. Brandon."

"Did he, as far as you know, or do you generally speak with any kind of respect or consideration of or to me?"

"That is different."

"Will you kindly explain the difference in our behaviour or situation which makes me forfeit any respect which is due to him?"

"You shouldn't ask things like that. I don't want to say things to offend you, and the answer to that question probably would. Be content with getting what you can out of the sinking ship."

Mrs. Brandon looked annoyed.

"Do you know how much I shall get? Do you know how much Claudius leaves behind him?"

"Not exactly. I know he is a wealthy man. He has lived as such, and always paid his debts."

"Then he never took you into his confidence about it?"

"I can't say he did exactly. So you won't get your information out of me."

"But supposing you get it out of me? Supposing the confidence withheld from you was reposed in me—what would you say?"

George was startled and wrathful.

"I believe he was d—d helpless old ass enough in his latter years to do many things, but hardly that."

"I must ask you to speak respectfully of my friend, Claudius Farringdon, whether he be alive or dead," said Mrs. Brandon, with that very charming smile which accentuated the slightly aquiline tendency of her nose. She then continued: "You will be able to convince yourself very soon, no doubt, whether

I am telling you the truth or not; and when you hear it you will see that I could have no motive in telling you such things if they were not true. Your father will leave you the place and the principal that brings in the annual allowance he let you have at your marriage. That is all."

"Oh, come now! Why, I have spent a couple of years' income in the last seven months, I suppose. Look here, if you know so much about it, tell me who has got the rest—not you?"

"No, not I."

"Well, who, then? I daresay we can run them in for undue influence."

"As you would have tried to do if it had been me." Again the aquiline smile.

"I shouldn't wonder if I did. And, by Jove! Mrs. Brandon, you had only got to show yourself, and the judge would see what a strong case I had," added George, laughing.

This crude compliment seemed to rather please than annoy Mrs. Brandon, though it suggested a well-known precedent case in Greek mythology.

"He has not given his money to anybody who can be charged with undue influence. He has spent it on himself, in the form of an annuity. He got the most out of it in that way during his lifetime, and, of course, it didn't matter to him what might happen to us."

"——!" remarked George. "People oughtn't to be allowed to throw their money away on books and *bric-à-brac* and things when they've others to come after them! It's a man's duty to leave his property to his posterity."

"What would he have said to anyone who told him so?"

"He would have told posterity to follow his example and take care of itself, in all

probability. What's to become of you? Do you get nothing at all?"

"Not even the formal shilling with which people, in books, are cut off. But I'm provided for. I've laid by for a rainy day. It may be looked on as a drizzling day now, I think."

"It is for me, certainly. However, I'm glad you have not been landed as I have. I have been counting on something better than this state of things. In fact, I shall be rather in a hole soon, I fancy. Wriggle out somehow, I daresay."

"I daresay. Like a slow-worm," she nearly added.

"What do you mean to do?"

"I shall leave here to-morrow. I have been getting a place in town ready to receive me. I have a home—at least, I have made one quite good enough for my small necessities, 95, Tavistock Square. If you will

condescend to call there sometimes, when you have nothing else to do, I shall be glad to have a chat with you. Whatever else I am, I am at any rate an old friend of your father's, am I not?"

"I shall be very happy—oh, certainly," replied George. It was wonderful to see how far the attitude of moral reprobation had broken down in the last few minutes. This may be simply accounted for by remembering that he was being talked to by a pretty woman, rather older than himself; that she had not taken from him any property which theoretically should be his; and that his wife was safe upstairs in her bedroom. This may not seem highly cogent or perfectly moral reasoning, or indeed reasoning at all; but it was quite sufficient for George. The potent fact of propinquity overcomes many scruples, and Mrs. Brandon, free and independent in London, would be on a very

different moral level to Mrs. Brandon dependent at his home and capable of exerting "undue influence." If anyone had suggested to him that he was putting himself in the way of temptation, he would have resented it as impertinent and most unfair. He was man of the world enough to take care of himself. Even a sharp fellow like Van Westerdijk had admitted that.

"Hadn't you better go and get some rest now, Mr. Farringdon? You will have a good deal to do the next two or three days."

"I think, on the whole, I will. What are you going to do?"

"I shall stay here and read a little; then I shall pack up. I'm going by the early train to-morrow. I shan't be wanted here."

"Ah—yes, I daresay you are right," said George, who was wondering how his wife was to be introduced to this other lady; and felt grateful to her for removing a difficulty.

Dick's questions might be easily staved off; but to have the two meeting at meals, etc., involved complications beyond his diplomatic powers. "Well, good-night, Mrs. Brandon."

"Good-night. I'm not so bad after all, am I?" she added, bending those Oriental eyes on him, and waking in him the impulse to say:

"By Jove, no!"

If anyone had told him on the preceding day that he would shake hands with Mrs. Brandon, and that willingly, he would scarcely have believed it. Yet it happened.

And she subsided again into her chair with a quiet laugh, as he shut the door.

"So I shocked you, Mrs. George, and you can't associate for a single evening with me? Never mind, I think I have got you all now. And the sins of the father shall be visited upon the children till they learn that I do not forgive or forget, and the Jew girl shall pay you back with interest your outlay on her, Claudius Malcolm Farringdon. George is

a weaker fool that I thought him. It would be amusing to squeeze him like an orange and throw away the skin, even if I did not hate him and all the tribe and all their belongings. And poor old Caspar, I wonder what he is doing? He shall share the spoil if he likes—the girl for him; he did not know I saw him at the wedding, and that I heard of him in Germany. The girl for him. The estate for father, who can then become a baron if he likes, and help to keep the Eastern Question stirring, and give large sums in charity; good advertisement for him —always pays. And I? Well, I get satisfaction. Julius—I nearly forgot him; he will want to be paid off, I suppose. That will be the affair of Baron Nathan von Rosenfeld." And she read for a time. "Grand lines these," she murmured:

> Time turns the old days to derision,
> Our loves into corpses or wives;
> And marriage and death and division
> Make barren our lives.

"This is the sort I really like. It's warm, though. Wonder how Mrs. George would like it? I'll leave the volume in her way, with a page or two turned down, before I go. Hate those good girls — always did. They always take such jolly care to let you know they're good, and that they know it. They hate Us because the men prefer Us, and the men are right. What are sixty fair, pure, pallid, flaxen-haired girls to one of us?"

Part the Sixth.

THE SPREAD NET.

CHAPTER I.

"I DON'T CARE."

My heart is sair, I darena tell,
My heart is sair for somebody.

AFTER Claudius Farringdon's remains had been buried with all the barbaric pomp suitable to his position in the county, and satisfactory to the tastes and pockets of the undertaker, George began to discover that he was not half as much affected by the loss as he imagined he theoretically ought to be. Having lived a good deal apart from his father, and been uniformly treated by the latter as a distant and, on the whole, undesirable acquaintance, he scarcely felt him-

self in a son's position and did not seem to miss a father. Indeed, "if it had not been for that beastly annuity," as he pleasantly put it, George would have viewed the change which made him lord of the manor with extreme placidity, or rather with that sober joy, that black-crape gladness occasionally seen playing over the expressions of an assembly of relatives, to whom as a last sad consolation, a surprisingly favourable codicil is being read.

After a few afternoons of loafing round the stables with cigarettes, in a black suit, a few nights of dozing between whisky and water and *The Sporting Times*, in a wadded smoking-coat, and a few bad quarters and halves of hours with the family solicitor, who annoyed George very much by pointing out to him the smallness of his income as compared with the largeness of his liabilities, he discovered that Sokebridge was slow—devilish slow, as long as it was bad form for

the neighbours to call. "I suppose," he said to Dick, "they wouldn't stand it, if we sent out cards next week? I don't think they would—you see, if I had the governor's income as well as his place, it wouldn't matter what one did; but as things are we must mind what we are about—here, at any rate, where they are all sticklers for these old-fashioned dodges — or people will be cutting us."

"Do you want people to come and call?" asked Dick, with some surprise.

"Well, it would make the place more cheerful. It's rather a cow's life one leads here, without society."

"But it is such a beautiful place."

"Scenery—oh yes, of course. But I'm not so jolly enthusiastic as all that. You can't talk to a sunset or a view."

"I once thought you liked everything beautiful so much."

"Yes—I know—quite true; but, all the

same, it's deuced dull when you've got nothing else. I've read every blessed Society paper through. By Jove! now, if there was a theatre or anything here!—but then I suppose one couldn't go. Someone would be safe to see one."

"George!"

"Well?"

"Why do you wear mourning?"

"You must. It's the right thing. People expect it."

Dick asked no more. She knew George pretty well now. If your pottery is cracked it is of no use to expose its flaws. It is not consolatory, and it will exhibit them often enough without assistance.

At last George determined to go to London, saying he would find some house to let furnished for the season, and come back for his wife when it was ready.

Dick was content enough to be left

behind. She had the library to employ her time indoors, and meant to arrange a room for herself with a selected set of books and other appurtenances, as George had given her *carte blanche* to do. Besides, there were the extensive and really beautiful grounds to roam about in, extending to the sea one way, and halfway up the wooded down the other. Poor Dick! A girl of nineteen ought not to like solitude. It is not a good sign. And in her loneliness in the old house among the old furniture, the old treasures, the pictures and the books, Dick thought very sad thoughts indeed, as she sat in her own window, watching the April days die; looking at the great splendid sunset clouds, looking at the light rosy flecks and streaks high up in the blue, as the light and life faded out of them, waiting for the soft night to advance from the west, and the lonely stars to shine over the sailless sea. The

world and the sky and the sea were beautiful, but they were terribly empty of all but memory for her. She might have had—so much! She had got—so little! It was just the million-and-first repetition of the old story. "The world is empty, and gives us our wishes no more. Father, take back your child to yourself. I have enjoyed the one joy of the earth, I have lived and I have loved." Old reiterated words, old reiterated story, quite as old as the world, perhaps as old as the universe. The people in Mars and Venus and the Pleiades probably know the story and sing the song; but it appears to each of us as an unexampled and horrible novelty. Dick had lived, and loved—loved one man and married another; nothing commoner: now she was finding it out too late; nothing commoner. It happens every day, no doubt; so do murder, and lying, and treachery, and birth, and love, and death:

important things some of them to most of us. Dick was alone in the world, and thought she knew nobody she cared to speak to or think of—but one; and he was too far for speech, and too near, much too near, to her thoughts. Why, why, why? was the whole burden of her lamentation. "Why was I so weak, so ignorant, and so short-sighted? Why is my whole life spoilt and made sad? Why am I punished so much for just being a silly little girl and knowing no better? And he—he—if I could only stand again in the shade of the old red tower and hear him speak, and watch his eyes, and look with him far away into the crimson sky; once see again the face I never quite see when I dream of him, and have him talking to me alone in the summer evening; there, where the fire-flies were circling in the fir-trees, where we looked down on the lights of the town below that made it so beautiful

at night—and then die afterwards. I don't think it could be wrong just to see him once like that, and ask him to forgive me for being—what I can't help; it wouldn't be wrong if I died afterwards, and he would understand." And she did not cry. She sat still thinking all this, while the stars rose over the sea, and the cold night wind came in and brought her dreams, more and more dreams from beyond that sea. And she took the wind to her bosom and welcomed it, because it came from over there—the place where she had once been very happy, so happy that she did not know it. She went over all that Caspar had ever said to her — she found she had it all by heart. She remembered the colour of his clothes, the way he looked when he said: "Good-bye, Mrs. Farringdon." Then the thought came suddenly: "Suppose this should be as bad for him as it is for me. Would I be

glad or sorry? I should be glad, glad, glad! —and now I'm wicked as well as unhappy. Oh, my darling, shall I never be able to tell you?" And the cold night wind blew on her from over the sea, and Dick sat alone in the darkness, watching and waiting, waiting for the tears that would not come, and the love that would not go.

All very absurd, wasn't it? But it was no joke to her. It was not one only, but many nights that saw Dick sit so, gazing at the sea in the time of deepening shades: that is, the time for rest and memory. All evening clouds and summer twilight skies are full for those who can read them, of messages and memories. Dick could read them. Everyone can at some time, when love has lent a painter's eyes and sorrow a poet's heart to the perhaps otherwise commonplace being.

Over and above all which—Dick caught a bad cold.

In the park of Sokebridge Manor there runs a broad and shady path, on a low slope near the sea. It is in deep shadow, save where a rare streak of sunlight finds its way, in the afternoon, through the immense trees that grow at irregular intervals on either side of the way. There are giant firs whose lowest branches sweep the ground between ancient elms, some half split by storms of long ago, above whose highest and most insecure-looking twigs the rooks, noisily circling, discuss their annual architectural efforts. A lower growth of shrubs joins the trees into an almost continuous wall, save where some steep slope leads to worn stone steps disappearing into darker and more ivy-grown woody recesses, or where a tree-formed cavern half reveals a fishless fountain, where no waters plash to disturb the stagnant pool where weeds float in pale green streamers, where tall reeds stand motion-

less in solitude unbroken even by a breeze, and where newts and tadpoles flourish exceedingly. Through an occasional arch-like aperture on the lower slope glitter foliage-framed visions of the distant sea, purple and green. And from here it looks solitary too.

The path is of old copper-coloured gravel, unswept and uncared for now, with patches of green moss looking like verdigris on the copper. Since Mr. M'Cullach, the head gardener, had retired after Claudius Farringdon's death, his place had not been filled, and his underlings took their own way, which led them by the most direct route to the nearest public-house. Consequently the path was unpolluted by the process dear to gardeners, by them called tidying up.

On this path sauntered the girl-wife, Dick Farringdon, and her new-found friend, Lily Carew, in the rosy and flamy light of a spring evening, when the new pale

yellow and green leaves had begun to speck the sombre woods, when the face of the sea was lit with a salmon-coloured glow from the west, and the hidden voices of the nightingales sang all round them.

"It is almost a new place to me, you know," said Lily Carew; "I hardly ever remember coming here while old Mr. Farringdon was alive."

"It is beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yes. It seems just the place for you to live in, with plenty of beautiful things to look at, and not too much to think about."

"That's a pity, for we are going soon. George has written to say he has found a house, and will come and fetch me."

"What a shame!"

"Why?"

"To leave this place now of all times. Don't tell me you really want to go to London!"

"Oh, I don't just know. It's beautiful

here, certainly. I can't say that I wish I was away. I suppose a place always looks best when you are going to leave it."

"Don't go, then. Say you mean to stay here. Put your foot down firmly. Never mind the beetles, you won't crush them."

"That won't quite do. You see George wants me to be in London."

Lily's brow lowered.

"No one would make me go anywhere I didn't like, if I had fifty husbands."

"Wait till you have one, Lily."

"Well, I know what I would do, and what I wouldn't do. But there, I never went in for having an angelic disposition."

"Is that meant to imply that I do?"

"You don't need to go in for it, my dear Dick, any more than you need to dye your hair fair. But I think bowing before the storm and being humble to adversity, and so on, is all rubbish."

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

"Do you? But I don't propose doing either the one or the other, I am only going to town for the season."

"London is a hateful place. The average of small-pox has risen lately; you will catch it and lose your beauty."

"Oh, I think I can risk that. Then there are all sorts of nice things to do. There is the Academy."

"I hear it is going to be a disgracefully poor Academy this year."

"And then there are the theatres. I take quite a childish delight in going to theatres—you see I never was in one before I was married."

"Yes. That must be jolly!" said Lily, forgetting her assumed oracular pessimism; and then, suddenly relapsing into it, added impressively: "the papers say that the drama has never before reached such a low ebb as at the present moment."

"I don't believe you ever read a newspaper and you are just inventing. But I should really like to see the Academy. Fancy now, if some poor fellow, who lived and worked in a garret by himself, had sent some small landscape which the hanging people had put in some out-of-the-way corner where no one noticed it, while he kept watching the people pass by, and wondering and hoping if someone would at last stoop down and look at it. And I might see it, and then it might be some place I remembered, in Scotland say—or—or Germany. And I would buy it, and bring it down here; and he would be so happy, and buy a new pipe and some beer, and take the rest home to an old mother perhaps, and she would be proud and glad —and I should have done it."

"He would spend it all on beer. They always do."

"Indeed? Oh, but you know there are splendid geniuses, poor young men, living alone and working hard against debt and time, and wearing out their brains to reach the hearts of people who don't care twopence whether they live or die. And it is often quite an accident if people get to know them and like them; and when they are proud, and won't paint pictures of babies or write silly novels, which people like, they go on getting older and prouder and sterner-hearted, and poorer, until they just die. And no one at all cares, except the one or two friends, poor like themselves, who have always stuck to them without being able to help them. And that must be just awful."

"Really! You have a wonderful imagination, Dick. I don't believe much in your friend the starving genius. They can always paint old masters for dealers, or write tracts and Floriline verses, and I believe as long

as that keeps them in tobacco and whisky they don't much care for national recognition of their genius. Unless the nation recognised it at a shilling a head in a private gallery. But it's a pity you are going away so soon."

"Why?"

"Because Charlie is coming, and we asked him to bring a genius with him. He is not starving exactly, I'm afraid, but he is otherwise everything you could want. He wears old clothes—he told me he dealt in them—has long hair, and is as mad as the united hat trade. And I like him ever so much. So do you."

"Who is it then?"

"Don't be hypocritical — I beg your pardon, Dick, I couldn't help saying that. It's Caspar Rosenfeld, of course. I never knew anyone like him, did you?"

"I don't think I ever did."

"It's so delightful to see him trying to

delude himself into the idea that he is misanthropic when he is really so absurdly good-natured and tender-hearted."

"Do you think that?"

"Of course. I know it. Don't you?"

"Well, yes; I've often thought something of that kind was really what his nature was."

"Oh, you have, have you? And don't you think he's awfully good-looking—in a strange sort of way, I mean, quite different to the ordinary handsome man one sees or draws on scraps of paper from imagination, with a Greek nose and a big moustache?"

"I am not in the habit of drawing handsome men from imagination."

"What do you do it from then, memory? That's better, of course."

"Nonsense. Look, there is someone coming down the steps."

"Goodness! It's Charlie—I suppose Mr. Rosenfeld is behind. Oh, I am glad——"

"Surely, he isn't behind, I hope—I don't see anyone. How do you do, Mr. Deane?"

"Delighted to see you again, Mrs. Farringdon. Well, Lily, in your orisons are all my sins forgotten?"

"Why haven't you brought Mr. Rosenfeld, Charlie? and how did you know we were here?"

"Caspar wouldn't come. Some bosh about work or something, and didn't seem to want to come; I didn't know you were here, and I have been exploring the park for you on spec for about an hour."

"Is Mr. Rosenfeld working very hard?" asked Dick.

"Seems to be. I found him the other day wallowing in 'copy' in his shirt sleeves, smoking a clay pipe, and looking awfully played out. He does his journalistic work all day, and independent writing of his own, with coffee, all night, I fancy."

"But why?"

"That's just what I said; and he said beggars couldn't be choosers, or some equally refreshing and original sentiment. Rum old boy. I say, Lily, don't you think it's time to go home to tea?"

"Wait a minute, Mr. Deane. Why shouldn't you and Lily come and take tea with me? We will have it in the library, then we can go and watch the sunset afterwards, and you can take Lily home."

"That is a most inviting proposition; I think we should be foolish not to accept it, don't you, Lily?"

"Oh yes, it's awfully kind of you, Dick."

"My dear people, I only want your company a little longer; and I have a proposition to make which we will talk about when we get indoors. Come away."

The three went together into the house and sat in that luxurious old library, where

a trace of the old atmosphere still lingered, though the glass door opening on the lawn was open, and the spring air was straying in. Tea, and bread-and-butter, and small cakes on a small table between them, invited attention.

"Luxury, by Jove! after Great Brown Street," remarked Charlie. "London's a very nice place; but it's nicest for the people who can afford to live in the country."

"There!" exclaimed Lily, "that's just what I've been saying; and here's Dick going away to London just as I have begun to know her."

"Listen a little while. What I was going to propose was," said Dick, "that I would ask you and your aunt, Miss Deane, to come and stay with me in town, when our house is ready, for as long as your grandmamma can spare you. I don't think George is likely to object; I asked him one

day if I might, and he said 'All right.' Will you try to get over your disapproval of London for a while?"

"You angelic little creature!" exclaimed Lily, falling upon Dick's neck, and behaving, Charlie said, as Mr. Crummles did to Nicholas Nickleby at their celebrated farewell.

After the pale twilight had begun to replace the glow of the evening, Charlie noticed that Dick Farringdon had a cough. He said:

"You have no right to be sitting in open windows like this at night, Mrs. Farringdon. You have got a cold already; take the word of the faculty for it, you can't afford to risk getting it worse."

"I don't care."

Charlie did not seem to hear this.

"What?" said he carelessly.

"I must be more careful. You are right, no doubt." But Dick moved not

from her position in a low chair in the open French window, with the breeze on her that filtered through the cedars and came from the land of the setting sun.

Charlie and Lily eventually left, and rambled home together, were slightly late for supper, and took the consequent scolding very complacently.

CHAPTER II.

GEORGE HOLDS TWO CONSULTATIONS.

In the meantime George had gone to London. On business, he stated to such acquaintances as he saw at the railway station, with that tendency to apologise to public opinion which characterised him. In the train he took out a very elegant pocket tablet of ivory and a gold pencil-case, and appeared to be absorbed in deep calculations. Judging by his expression, the results were unsatisfactory. This was natural, for the figures he was jotting down and wrestling with were his budget, his strictly private plain statement of revenue and expenditure, in

which the latter item bore to the former the proportion frequent in South American Republics. Notwithstanding this fact, he was of course travelling in a first-class carriage. People like George economise by reducing their wives' dressmakers' accounts, circulating library subscriptions, and pony carriages, criticising the servants' appetites, and saying: "I can't think what you want with a maid. Why can't women dress themselves, I wonder?" The last things it occurs to them to disestablish and disendow are their cigars and dog-cart, man-servant, luxurious travelling, and sporting papers. As there was no one in the compartment to report him and gain a reward of five pounds by doing so, George put his feet on the cushion before him, dismissed the budget into his pocket with a parting oath, and settled himself to smoke sleepily a long and mild cigar (one of those celebrated Havanas that are

exported so plentifully from the free city of Bremen), to glance at *The Lamp* and *The Sporting Times*, and digest the matutinal brandy-and-soda with which he had fortified himself at starting. By the time he reached the terminus he was plunged in a refreshing sleep, with the expression of an infant in whom there is no guile. On waking that expression altered. He left his newspapers in the train, had his portmanteau and hat-box put on a hansom, and drove to "The Tavistock" in Covent Garden. No Thatcher's for him when he was *en garçon* — ridiculous idea — such hideous slaveys too, they made a fellow sick to look at them. There he had a plate of whitebait, some cutlets and tomato sauce, a pint of champagne and a glass of chartreuse. After these simple refreshments, so suited to a healthy young man obliged to economise, many of whose betters lunched on biscuits

and a glass of milk in Newcastle Street, he strolled out into the Strand and entered the inviting portals of the Gaiety Restaurant, settled in a niche before another chartreuse, and was before long there detected by Dr. Van Westerdijk, who was returning from the City, and had not failed to enter this one of the many places at which many a literary character is accustomed to halt on his way (with a black bag) from business to home. This dignitary settled down by George's side and invited him to drink at his (Dr. Van Westerdijk's) expense. George, who knew that was the right thing to do, whether he wanted it or not, elected to take another chartreuse. The doctor ordered a black coffee. Black coffee was the limit beyond which his dissipations never strayed in business hours. In whatever mysterious haunt might be his home, perhaps he took a glass of schiedam.

"I have been wanting to see you," said George.

"Yes?"

"Fact is, I'm in rather a hole, you know—that advance Marsden & Co. made—deuced kind of them it was to break their usual rules to make it, too—I ought to pay it back, you know."

"Yes, I should say you ought. Sôm-time, soon, yes?"

"It's been left a good deal to my discretion, but I have lately had a note, or rather my solicitor has, quite a civil note you know, not pressing and that sort of thing, but meaning at the same time that they would like to see the colour of my money."

"Vell? You vill pay tem. You 'ave chost come into a fortune? No?"

"Devil a bit. Wish I had."

"I tort you had. Who is te man tere vit long black hair and a mouth made for

talking? Do you know? Yes? I know most people here, but I 'ave not eem before."

"Where? Which?"

"Standing at te bar with my contributor, Moriarty."

"That's Rosenfeld. I don't know who Moriarty is."

"Tat Rosenfeld? Ah, another of my pepol. But he does not côm often to the office, and I am not tere often. I know his hantwriting. Yes."

"Well, but what do you think I had better do about this money? I suppose there is only one thing to do?"

"Yes?"

"Go to the Jews, I mean. Do you know anything in that line? Could you lay your finger on a man who could advance cash for a short time, any blooming interest he likes, you know, and wait till he gets it?"

"I should be very sorry to advise any

yong man to do anyting of the sort. Chost tink vot course you are entering on. You would have to gif security—vot security could you gif? Chews won't tek your wordt, you know, not if you were te Queen's son."

"There's the place."

"But tat is a serious responsibility for you, supposing you could not pay?"

"Oh, but I could in a little while. Half what that old solicitor said was all bosh to frighten me, I believe. If he thinks that's the way to stop me doing what I like with my money, he'll find he's jolly well mistaken, that's all."

"Yes. I would not be dictated to. No —not for Venice. No!"

"I don't see what Venice has to do with it. However, if I am determined to get some money, it can't do you any harm to tell me of somebody, if you can, who is less likely to land me than some unknown and

accidental chap I may happen on. Anyhow, if you can't tell me of anyone, perhaps Rosenfeld can—he's a Jew himself."

The little doctor started, and his eyebrows went up and then down, and he said:

"You vait. Anoder trink? Yes! Now look up here. Do you really mean to borrow mônee?"

"I do, as you put it so. But you know I must."

"You most. You see I 'ave don all I could, as frient, to prefent you? I tolt you lonkako at Nice, you most not risk your future at te gaming taple. You go, you game, you play, you win, you lose, you are artupp; you must get mônee, you go wit little letter from me to Marsden & Co.—honest, chentlemanly merchants, who make you a prifate adfance chost oud off courtisee to me, and tey tek your wordt for it, you signing a bit of paper as a matter of form. You

are a chentleman, you 'ave a character—a position."

"Yes, yes," said George impatiently, "I know all that, my dear fellow, and assure you I believe you have said everything judicious, and your acts have been as kind as your words. But it all goes to show I must get the money."

"I suppose you most. Vell—I can get it for you."

"Good man! I believe there isn't a difficulty a fellow could get into you haven't a remedy for."

"Oh, I ton't know," said the small Dutchman, with an amiable smile.

Caspar, who was lounging against the bar at this moment, turned round, and looked keenly from under his level black brows at the pair.

"Who's that?" he said, in an undertone, to Mr. Moriarty.

"Van Westerdijk. Don't ye know um? He's our preproyutor."

"The devil he is!"

"I don't know the other. Why, haven't ye seen the former before?"

"I think I have." And Caspar continued to survey the pair.

"Look here," said Van Westerdijk to George, "can you arranch to meet me—and the Shylock I shall fint—to-morrow, sômevere at sôm time—or sôm other tay?"

"Oh, yes. Sooner the better. But look here, I draw the line at pictures and cigars and wine, you know. I only want cash!"

"Olraite. You shall 'ave it."

"I don't know how to thank you for all your good nature, Van Westerdijk, I'm sure."

"Ton't trow your cratitude away on te ontesserving. I ton't lent you the mônee. I most be off now. I will wraïte to you. Gootpye."

"Ta, ta." And Van Westerdijk left the niche. George felt cheerful, talkative, and generally benevolent. He had had a pint of champagne, and three glasses of chartreuse, and his difficulties were staved off, presumably, for the time. He felt he must talk to someone —it did not much matter to whom, and looked up in search of an acquaintance. He caught Rosenfeld's eye at once, gravely contemplating him. George nodded amicably, and beckoned; Caspar strolled over to him, and sat down at George's invitation. George was cordial. He was excited. His face glowed. His conversation at times ran a narrow risk of becoming intelligent.

"Haven't seen you for ages, Rosenfeld. You all right?"

"Thank you, yes. Are you staying in town?"

"Came up house-hunting. Left the missus at home. Knocking about *en garçon.*

You understand that sort of thing, don't you?"

"I think so," said Caspar, with a strange longing to wring his interlocutor's neck.

"When I'm sick of it, I'll settle the house, and go back you know, fetch her up, and be proper."

"Is Mrs. Farringdon quite well?"

"Very jolly indeed, thanks. Know the fellow I was talking to, don't you? Van Westerdijk? Of course you do. You write for *The Investigator*, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Can't say it's much in my line, so I won't pretend I've read it. But I read *The Lamp* every week. It's often spicy, but I can't quite rise to the high intellectual level of you *Investigator* fellows. I do like art and literature and that sort of thing in a way, but *The Lamp* puts one up to all the tips, just enough to be able to talk about in society, you know,

while the other thing analyses, and criticises, and synthesises, and so forth until your brains addle."

"I often feel that myself. Is Dr. Van Westerdijk a great friend of yours?"

"Best I have in the world at present. He's landed me out of a money difficulty, and that's the best thing a friend can do, I take it."

"Unless he lands you in another. But I am speaking generally. I know but little of Dr. Van Westerdijk."

"And that little? Good?"

"Well, on the whole—bad."

"He didn't know you by sight. He asked me who you were."

"Curious. I asked who he was. Don't consider my opinion of him as final, on any account. He may be the ideal philanthropist as far as you are concerned. Men take strange fancies. You were saying he was going to lend you money?"

George was now at that particular stage when men become confidential, and ready to swear eternal friendships with comparatively indifferent persons on the slightest stimulus.

"Well, my dear fellow, the facts are this way. But you're having nothing. What will you take, champagne?"

"Thanks, I'll have a glass of beer."

"Oh, rot! Have some of the boy. Waiter! A small bottle of champagne, and two glasses."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I was going to say, I'm in debt. All fellows are. All the fellows I know are. But they've mostly got people or expectations or something to help them out of it. I had people—at least I had a governor, and I had expectations. Well, he went and died and landed me most iniquitously. It turns out that he has been living on an annuity, and has left me as poor as I was before, bar the estate. Well, there's a ramshackle old house

—not good for much, bar picturesqueness, and as I was saying to my wife, beauty is very nice—nobody more ready than me to allow that—but I'm d—d if you can eat it, or make it draw your carriage, and buy your clothes. There are a lot of books in it—some of them may fetch something—some jugs, and crockery, and furniture, and so on. Wife likes them, and so of course do I, but I have not her enthusiasm for the antique and romantic. *She* reads *The Investigator*, you bet."

"Does she?" said Caspar. "Ah!" And Caspar remembered that accidental admission whenever he laid pen to paper thereafter, to produce "copy" for that organ.

George doled out champagne liberally.

"Won't your friends join us?" he asked, looking at Mr. Moriarty, who was discussing the critical condition of their mutual mother-land with Mr. O'Rourke, who had arrived a little while before.

"Oh, they are very innocently happy with their whisky. Better leave them. Besides, you don't want to talk of your affairs before strangers, do you?"

"By Jove! No. You're right, Rosenfeld. Here's your health, old fellow. Well, I'm going to get my debts paid by the Hebrews. Beg your pardon, didn't mean anything offensive."

"Don't mention it. It no more offends me to mention money-lenders, because I am a Jew, than it would offend you, as a Christian, to hear me talk of burglars or drunkards, professions considered too violent and hazardous by my people. But you won't get money without heavy interest, and heavy security."

"Oh, bother the interest! I don't mean to pay anything till I feel inclined. They can have the house and place for security."

"Suppose your bill falls due when you

are not ready to pay, are you prepared to give up your father's house, and all the refinements, little luxuries, and all the acres you own?"

"Well, of course not. It's risky. But what can I do? Look here, Rosenfeld, you're a good fellow; you know me, I'm devilish sorry if I've ever been offensive to you, I am a little patronising sometimes, I know." George was now sentimental.

"Well, you are. But I don't mind. I don't want to see you, and yours, dragged into an abyss, whose depths you know nothing of."

"But what am I to do?" George was alarmed and excited, with the dread of some nameless, shapeless horror. Two pints of champagne, and three glasses of chartreuse, and his debts and doubts produced an unhappy crisis in his mind, synchronous with a waving sensation in the eyes, and internal

physical uneasiness. Caspar thought long, and said at last:

"Make over your estate in trust to someone—say your wife. You can enjoy it just the same, and no one can touch it."

"By Jove! I will. You're my guardian angel, Rosenfeld."

"Quite so. But do you think you can keep the same mind a day or two longer? Until you are out of the clutches of Dr. Van Westerdijk and his friends? Believe me——"

"Ah! It's me friend Caspar!" said a familiar voice, and a pair of glasses beamed radiantly on the pair. "And Mr.——I know um very well. I've forgot his neem—knew um at Nice—Admiral Slayman, chormun wife. Remember O'Rourke, sir?"

"Of course, of course. How are you? Have some champagne?"

"Don't think I'll mix champagne with whisky. I've brought ut with me. I hord

ye talkin' of Dr. Van Westerdijk: I hope ye don't believe in um still?"

"Well, I don't know just what to think. I think, if you men will excuse me, I'll go out in the air and think there. Cool my head, don't you know. Good-bye, see you all again soon." And George went away with a slight lurch.

"He's dronk."

"Not quite. But he's excited."

"He's horty." And Mr. O'Rourke cocked his hat, fingered his moustache, and ordered, at Caspar's invitation, his seventh glass of whisky, which he took with the same impunity and equanimity as the preceding six. It affected him in no way but to enrich his brogue.

"It's horruble," he remarked axiomatically, "to see a man drunk. It degreeds humanity —provided humanity is capable of degradation."

George, after a short walk in the "caller air" of the Strand, hailed a hansom irresolutely and automatically.

"Where to, sir?"

"Ninety-five, Tavistock Square."

CHAPTER III.

LILY SENDS HER INVOICE.

About a week after the events recorded in the last chapter, Charlie Deane lay reading in bed in all the lazy luxury of a Sunday morning, whose spring sunlight streamed in at the open window, the following letter, which had arrived late the night before:

"Dear Charlie,

"I meant to have written before, but you see I didn't. You know my way of putting things off, especially agreeable things. I have been enjoying the pleasure of anticipation of writing instead of doing it.

Hope you enjoyed it too. We—*i.e.*, Aunt Lucy, Dick F., and self—are coming next week to stay with D. in Kensington. *He* is to meet us in London. That's like him, isn't it, not to come down? At first Aunt L. resisted going, and I was disrespectful, after which there was a fight. Of course she had to give in; so we're coming. I don't think D. is well; she has a cough and a curious far-away look in her eyes at times, so that you might think she had lost something long ago—had let a bird fly away into the sky and was watching for it to come back again. My own idea that; very pretty, I think. She came to see us again the other afternoon and stayed tea. G. M. has taken to her, and the kitten has taken to her. So she has survived every ordeal of criticism the house can furnish. Good-bye till next week.

"Yours,

"LILY.

"P.S.—Kind regards to Mr. Rosenfeld.

"P.S. 2.—G. M. says, what church do you go to?"

Charlie smoked on calmly, and letting the letter drop in his lap, gazed out through his eye-glass at the clouds floating high above the chimneys of over-the-way. "Write sometime to-day," he reflected. "Compliment her on the use of pretty similes; must keep up the superior tone with a girl like that, or she may learn not to respect you—which would be fatal."

"*Referee*—py—por!" shouted a sudden boy below, gazing invitingly up at Charlie's open window. Charlie remembering that bodily repose was not inconsistent with intellectual occupation, bought a *Referee*, dressed, and leaned back in his chair reading it, his feet on the window-sill, his pipe hanging securely between his canine and bicuspid teeth and

emitting a thin languid streak of smoke at intervals. After extracting all that the paper yielded, down to the advertisements, he knocked the ashes of his pipe out on the window-sill, threw *The Referee* on the floor on one side of his chair, stretched, and went for a short walk round the room, pausing at the bookshelf to review the titles, and make up his mind what to read. After about four "laps," he lit another pipe and settled down to enjoy "Esmond," and opened the book first quite accidentally at the chapter headed, "An old story of a woman and a fool." "Oh, hang it! I hope this isn't a *sortes Thackerayanæ*." Before he had been occupied in this way long, the fidgety period set in, and after a few admiring glances of the sunlit sky, and a few more at the chimney-glass, he brushed a hat of the kind described as "unexceptionable for Sunday wear," and went out for a walk. He wanted to be in

the sunlight and among the people, so he turned out of Great Brown Street into the Tottenham Court Road, to which it is near, walked along Oxford Street a short way, descended Berwick Street, and prowled through the maze of Soho, musing on the fate of the unfortunate constable Peter Forth, and glancing at the interesting, though somewhat squalid surroundings, had a glass of lager beer and some bread and gorgonzola cheese at a dark little restaurant where gentlemen with low-necked shirts, black ties, wide trousers, gray-yellow skins, and narrow-brimmed hats were smoking and playing at small games of dominoes with a child-like pleasure, and found his way ultimately into Piccadilly. Then he walked to the Park, and sat on a bench for a time, observing the passers; then he got round gradually to the Marble Arch, and strolled back along Oxford Street, not stopping till

he got to Holborn, where he turned into Barnard's Inn, and invaded Caspar's den. That gentleman was reading a large book which lay on the table before him, and looked up as Charlie entered, with one of those sudden smiles which rarely lit up his dark face, and rapidly passed away.

"Come in; you bring the daylight with you."

"You look as if you wanted it. You have been staying in and grinding out copy too much. You look awfully yellow."

"I feel awfully yellow. I'm resting now and trying to collect a few ideas. I have had to do a review of the 'History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland,' in two immense volumes, this morning, for that beastly *Investigator*. *The Lamp* mercifully comes out on Saturday, so it is off my mind for the present. I am beginning to wonder now whether I shall ever be able to write

and think again in my own way, on my own subjects. I am becoming a sort of machine, capable of turning out so many novel notices, so many 'Short Stories,' so many 'Copies of Verse' per month.

He cannot think who needs must swink.

That is pathetically true in this best of all possible worlds, where you are ruled by the holy law of Supply and Demand."

"I don't know what swinking is, but I don't see why you should write trash if you can do better."

"You will know some day what it means. You won't find it in your medicine books and sporting papers. As for my writing, when one works to order for bread-and-cheese, one must write trash very often. Look at the songs at the music-publishers, things that become the fashion and are howled and croaked and bayed in the draw-

ing-room, the music-hall, the street, and the excursion-train; do you suppose that all the people who write them cannot do anything better? Some of them can write real poetry, but they know better than to waste their time in trying. If I had a fortune——"

"Well, if you had a fortune, if you struck ile, what would you do?"

"I would write to please myself, and possibly to incidentally displease other people. I would own a theatre, and I would have it called the English Theatre, and I would have unadulterated English dramas played there, of the best authors who have been since the Miracle Plays vanished with the dark mediæval night at the first streak of the dawnlight of dramatic literature. I would have frequent change and no long runs. If any of the fortune was left after that, I would start a monthly periodical, to

air the views of all such men as had the brains to find, the tongue to explain, and the courage to utter truth on all subjects. That would probably be even more unpopular than the theatre."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, I mean that I would have no long political articles from men who write from three or four different party standpoints in the course of a day, and twist the same fact three or four different ways to suit the audience. They can do that elsewhere if they like. I would not deprive them of the means of making a living for their wives and children out of the folly and credulity of the nation, but they should not do it in my magazine. I would not say to a contributor: 'My dear fellow, *I* am quite of your opinion, but *they* will never stand it, you know.' 'They' should have to stand it if it were true, sensible, and well written."

"They mightn't read it."

"Oh, yes, they would. Somebody would say it was scandalous, or blasphemous, and denounce it in the highly moral and consistent 'organs' as they call them, and then the public would rush. And I would not have anyone preaching the fine old principle of steadily and heavily sitting on first attempts, strictly *quâ* first attempts. I would admit, after due deliberation, the proposition that you cannot begin with a second attempt. Nor would I print a notice of a book or play knowing that the writer had not read that book, or seen more than one act of that play. Now let us hear your news."

"I was going to tell you several things, only you will talk so much yourself that I thought I would let you run down before I began."

"I don't often have anyone to talk to—

at least, not anyone I can give the genuine outpouring to. I don't call 'What are you going to have?' and 'I don't mind if I do,' conversation, and that is what I mostly get in the week-day walk of this life."

"I've had a letter from Lily. Kind regards to you."

"Thanks."

"She and aunt are coming to town this week."

"Really? That is unusual, isn't it?"

"They are coming to stay with Dick Farringdon, at their new house in Kensington."

"Ah, Mrs. Farringdon—she is coming with them?"

"Yes."

"I see."

And Caspar smoked silently.

At last he spoke and said:

"There was a thing I was going to ask

you. I never met anyone I thought I would ask it of before—but, would you care to share these chambers with me? There's another bedroom I don't use, you know, and there is plenty of room for your books and penates here. You haven't any furniture to move but pipes, I suppose, and as you have your work to do and I have mine, we shouldn't disturb one another much. It would lessen your expenses, and, what is also important, mine, and I think we could tolerate each other. Think it over by yourself at leisure."

Charlie started up.

"Doesn't want much thinking over! It's just the thing I've been dreaming of, though I shouldn't have dared to suggest it to you. Of course, I will, old man. And if we don't like it, we can leave off, you know. It is the happiest thought we have had yet."

"All right. Let's sally forth and get some dinner now."

And they walked to a certain foreign restaurant well known to them, which concealed itself up a court in Holborn, where a select few of their acquaintances usually assembled on Sunday evenings to eat a very good and well-cooked dinner at the low prices which are an indispensable ingredient of Illyrian sustenance. They found Jerry Carpenter there, full of professional anecdotes given with a kind of light-hearted enjoyment peculiar to the medical student who regards human suffering and death purely from the artistic and, to some extent, jocular standpoint. Carpenter was a little in awe of Caspar, and did not take up quite so much of the conversation as he would have done before another audience. They had only got as far as the soup when Mr. Jack Miller appeared, and a comfortable, apparently merry, and evidently noisy *parti carré* was

instituted, who sat for a couple of hours, chatting of all things under the sun and gas-light, over coffee and cigarettes, until Caspar said he must go to his chambers and work.

Miller mounted an omnibus as the commencing stage of the complex journey from Holborn to Brixton, and Charlie and Jerry Carpenter walked towards Bloomsbury together. Carpenter lived in Bernard Street, so they walked up Southampton Row and across Russell Square together, Charlie having accepted an invitation to smoke a pipe and discuss diseases in Carpenter's rooms. On his way home, several hours later, Charlie passed through Tavistock Square. He then noticed a door opening, and a man in evening dress, cigarette in mouth, leaving the house, and walking towards him. He did not appear to notice Charlie, and hailed a passing hansom.

He was George Farringdon.

"By Jove!" muttered Charlie, gravely.

CHAPTER IV.

LILY LEADS THE WAY.

"I'M going out, so you people can do what you like," observed George Farringdon, buttoning a chocolate-coloured Newmarket coat and lighting a cigarette. "I'm going to the club first to look for letters," here he paused and glanced at his wife, who said in an unconcerned tone, "Yes?"

"And then I've promised to meet some men who asked me to go down with them to Richmond to dine."

"Then you will not be back to dinner?"

"Well, not if I go to Richmond. Do you object to my going there?" This a trifle defiantly.

"Not the least."

Then through the doorway: "Oh! Well, good-bye!"

And the clang of the front door sealed the interview, and sent Miss Lily Carew in a *pas seul* round the room, expressive of relief, delight, and triumph.

"And now we will do what we like, Dick, spend a 'happy day' somewhere. You look as if you wanted air and exercise and dissipation. What shall we do?"

"That depends a good deal on what your aunt wishes. She can only stay a few days away from Mrs. Deane, so we must let her enjoy herself in the way she likes best in the short time."

"Dick, neglect your strict sense of duty and propriety for a minute or two; I want to talk honest common sense."

"I am glad you want to do that. Well?"

"If I ask you questions, will you under-

take to give either a true answer, or none at all?"

"Very well. Proceed with the Shorter Catechism."

"First of all, aren't you glad, fearfully glad, as glad as I am, between ourselves, that Mr. Farringdon is gone out for the day?"

Dick looked this way and that, as if a mode of evasion were to be found in the door or window.

"You might tell me. You know I'm not a gossiping, frivolous girl."

"I'm glad to hear that. But is it necessary for us to talk about these things?"

"You evade the question, which shows you don't like to admit that you do snatch a fearful joy from the temporary absence of that man."

"Is it quite right for you to call my husband 'that man?'"

"I don't see anything offensive in it. He is a man, isn't he?"

"I am afraid he is. And I, being a woman, do not wish to discuss him with you, who are a girl."

"My dear Dick, you are a girl, and quite capable of feeling what another girl can. When you try to be dignified and matronly with me you only make yourself ridiculous. But you are a girl with a very Scotch trick of not answering questions. The Shorter Catechism is not finished yet."

"Well?"

"Did you ever—before you were married, of course, I mean—know any man you—well, thought you might care for? You know what I mean."

"Why are you so curious?"

"Natural feminine vice, the books say."

"I never knew any men at all—at least, very few," said Dick the Truthful, "before

I was married, to any extent. I didn't have my head full of ideal flirtations, like you."

"Horrible libel! Now I will be less merciful. Will you make an affidavit, or a power of attorney, or whatever it is, that there is no man in the whole world that you like better than any other man—not meaning your father, of course, you know? Don't prevaricate. Remember, twelve intelligent fellow-countrymen have their eyes on you."

Dick looked unhappy. "I don't think so."

"I thought I would trap you into forgetting all about Mr. Farringdon. I should make a splendid barrister. You hear what she says, gentlemen? She doesn't think so," continued Lily, addressing the mantelpiece, "which means that she won't say yes, and daren't say no, for fear those young men with the stretcher should come in, who carried out Ananias. You may leave the witness-box."

"You are very silly, I think."

"I don't feel as silly as you look. People generally do when they have to tell the truth. Truth has stuck at the bottom of that old well so long that it has got unsavoury. It's like my poor cat at Sokebridge when they fished her out of the duck-pond. I call her Ophelia in consequence."

"Ah me, such words as these I should abhor. And yet I like them for the orator," said Dick, gently stroking Lily's curly black scalp.

"What's that out of? Shakespeare?"

"No. Another great poet I found in the Manor House library. I used to pry about there by myself a good deal. I often had time for reading."

"Because he did the kindest thing he ever did, which was to leave you alone a good deal. What is the book?"

"Not a book for girls."

'Then why did you read it?"

"I have left off being a girl a long time ago."

"Poor Dick! I believe you have. But they shall not spoil your life more than I can help. I shall stick to you as long as you will let me."

To this valiant and valuable promise Dick said:

"So you shall. I can't afford to lose you. Give me a kiss, Lily." And these two girls cried a little in each other's arms, and wondered why, for a few minutes.

"Do you know what I would do in your place, Dick?"

"What?"

"I should kill George Farringdon."

"Hush! Don't talk like that."

"I hate him. I didn't know I could hate anyone so much."

"Don't!"

"Why not?"

"It is not right."

"I don't care when I hate or love anyone, whether it is right or not." Silence.

"Why did you ask me those questions, Lily? I can't suppose it was simply to make me uncomfortable."

"It's my turn to be evasive now. Why should it make you uncomfortable? If I knew anyone worth liking I should like him, and if I thought he was worth it I'd love him, though the sky split, the earth rent, and my acquaintances cut me."

"That's a very fine climax, certainly. But if you had no right to do so?"

"Everybody has a right to love anybody, if anybody deserves it; but anybody often doesn't."

"How do you know?"

"Got up the subject from books. However, as you wish me to suppose that you have no one of this kind in your mind's eye, we may drop the subject."

"I think we had better. We are not gaining anything by it, and I rather fancy you are uttering most unprincipled doctrines, though I don't undertake to distinctly state how and why."

Here Miss Deane entered, and Lily said:

"Oh, Aunt Lucy, wouldn't you like to go out for a long excursion somewhere—to St. Paul's, or Rosherville, or something? We shall have all the afternoon to ourselves, and I want to get out of the latitude of civilisation; I want to go on a river steamer from Wapping Old Stairs to Rotherhithe or Greenhithe, or one of those places. I'd like to go for a walk through Billingsgate, and Seven Dials, and Petticoat Lane, and all the places people talk about in books. Dick, I'll bet I know more about London than you."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Where's Smithfield?"

"You must ask an easier one than that. Where *is* Smithfield?"

"It is in the parish of St. Bartholomew or St. Luke, near the part of the world called Clerkenwell. A market takes place there. Bartholomew Fair was formerly held there, where you bought pigs."

"This statistical knowledge is truly surprising," said Dick; "but I think you have forgotten to mention another important feature of the neighbourhood. I'm sure it's there, though I don't know where Clerkenwell and Smithfield are."

"Oh, I suppose you mean the hospital. Yes, by-the-by, I should have mentioned that."

"Which reminds me that my nephew promised me that I should have a neuralgia prescription they recommend now, yesterday," said Miss Deane. "I suppose he has forgotten all about it. That's like a

young man; they mean well, but they are thoughtless."

"Well, Aunt Lucy, if I were a dresser in a hospital, and I had a good fracture to look after, or something really important like that, I should think myself quite right to forget my own toothache, if I had it, to say nothing of my aunt's."

"You can't possibly know anything about neuralgia, Lily, or you wouldn't make a joke of it or call it toothache."

"But where did you get all this phraseology about dressers and fractures, Lily?" asked Dick, laughing. "You do remember an apothecary?"

"Dreamed it. Let's all go and get on our things."

"If we are going out we had better take umbrellas," said Miss Deane. "Are you sure, Dick, you ought to go out these cold autumn afternoons?"

"Oh yes, Miss Deane; I must. If I don't go with you, I shall go out by myself when you are gone, and commit some imprudence that will write me in the roll of fame and give me a bad cold. I'll go and get ready."

"How careless that child is of herself!" said Miss Deane to Lily as soon as Dick was gone. "She goes out on impulse in all sorts of winds and fogs, totally forgetting how delicate she is. Her mind is stronger than her body."

"Don't know, I'm sure. It isn't much of a sign of strength of mind to catch a cold in your chest and let it stay there for months, and then go out looking for another. I believe Dick wants to make herself worse."

"Oh, you wouldn't suspect her of anything so wicked?"

"Wicked! I don't know. What might

be wicked in you and me is different for Dick. Her actions have another rule altogether."

"What do you mean? She is a dear little thing; but I suppose she's human, like me, and the cook, and everyone else?"

"As human as possible; but I'm sure not like you, or the cook, or anyone else."

"You're contradictory to-day, Lily. What's the matter? Have you and Charlie been fighting again?"

"I wish you would let Charlie alone, and not either keep poking him down my throat, or lecturing him on things he can judge best for himself about. I can't have an ordinary difference of opinion with someone, or a headache, or be cold, or hot, or still, or fidgety, without you talking Charlie, Charlie, Charlie, all day. I wish he was at the bottom of the—— Well, no, I don't; but do let him alone, and me!"

There was a certain trace of a tendency to tearfulness in Lily's voice, which offered a temptation to improve the occasion Aunt Lucy could not withstand, so she said:

"But you really must not give way to temper in this way, dear" (Miss Deane always said "dear" when she was in the didactic mood); "you don't know how bad it looks."

"You don't know how bad it will look if you don't leave me alone."

"It makes people reflect on us, and think how badly we must have brought you up."

"And that's a fine unselfish reason for correcting me, isn't it?" retorted Lily, with the nearest approach to a sneer she had ever yet attained. "Look here, Aunt Lucy, I like you very much; but it's only fair to tell you, as you don't seem to know it, that I am not a little girl now——"

"Then you shouldn't behave like one."

"And there are things I have my own opinion about, and mean to keep; and things you don't entirely understand," was Lily's defiant, if vague conclusion.

"She has all her poor father's obstinacy," reflected Miss Deane. "He called it resolution. We called it self-will. He always would have his own way—and much good it did him, poor fellow!" Then she turned to communicate the essence of this reflection to Lily, and found that young lady had relinquished the skirmish—had, in fact, left the room. She had gone upstairs to dress for out of doors, and to cry a little. The girl was nervous and irritable, and easily upset, what with Dick's affairs, with which she was far more intimately acquainted than her aunt, and certain obscure symptoms of her own, rather new to her, into which the pleasant face and dictatorial eye-glass of a

certain hardworking and yet cheery medical student entered with unusual frequency. By the time she had performed her toilet and come downstairs three steps at a time, however, she had forgotten all about the recent fight with her aunt, and was making frivolous jokes about the people they passed in the street, and the sights of London generally, including a grinning and prancing Neapolitan with unholy music, to whom she insisted on contributing a penny. She seemed excited, but she had a certain plot in her mind, perhaps a mistaken one, but kindly meant, of which the results will appear.

"How regal you look, Dick, in all those furs! A sort of small edition of an Empress of Russia. I never saw one, but I'm sure they are like that."

"Really? It is difficult to be dignified when one is accompanied by a girl who is tall enough to make people think her grown

up, who suddenly stops you to look at a monkey in a red dressing-gown leaping at the end of a chain, or goes up a side street to see Punch and Judy. Why, the other day, Miss Deane, when I was out with her, she entered into conversation with some street boys who were carrying a guy, and gave them a whole handful of coppers, to buy explosives with."

"That is all very well, Madame Dignity, but if I gave some coppers to the guy boys, you gave sixpence in silver, and you enjoyed Punch and Judy as much as I did. If we are both babies, don't let us be ashamed of it."

"Here is Earl's Court," said Miss Deane. "Though who the earl is and where the court is, I never could make out. Where are we going?"

"Where would you like to go, Miss Deane?" asked Dick.

"Could we go to St. Paul's? I have not

been there since I was quite a little girl. You, who know London, may laugh at me, but I confess a fascination for St. Paul's, and the Tower, and even the Monument: one might find Todger's if one sought diligently, I dare say."

"Well, you can't do them all in one dark afternoon, Aunt Lucy. Let's take the train to the Temple and then take a walk down Fleet Street, then we could come back by Newgate, or Ave Maria Lane—I like Ave Maria Lane, nice old-fashioned name—to Holborn, and so home. We can always drive if we are tired."

"Would you like that, Miss Deane?" asked Dick.

"I submit to your guidance. I don't know my way about London, but I should like to walk down Fleet Street. I feel such a quantity of learning and power and influence must always reside there." (Hear, shades of

Hoolan and Doolan, and bow!) "What attraction Lily can find in Newgate, I don't know."

"Why, they used to hang people there," explained Lily.

"You can't resist going there now, Miss Deane, can you? We might find the tavern where my Lord Tomnoddy and Treguse and their friend, Sir Carnaby Jenks of the Blues, went."

"Isn't that rather an improper book for young ladies, Dick?"

"Is it? I didn't know it was when I read it, and it amused me. However, as I cannot unread it, I must remain in my iniquity."

"You never used to be sarcastic, either," said Miss Deane.

"I suppose it's coming on me with the other infirmities age brings. Well, here is the booking-office."

"Aunt is in an awful temper," said Lily in a whisper, as that lady purchased three tickets. "I think it's the neuralgia, you know, so one must put up with it. She used the most dreadful language to me while you were upstairs getting ready."

"Did she?" replied Dick, laughing at the idea of poor, good, quiet, respectable Miss Deane breaking out under the influence of neuralgia into wild blasphemy. And they entered a train and started.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAY LILY LED.

"WHAT a beastly day!" exclaimed Charlie, hanging a damp overcoat over the back of a chair and carefully wiping, warming, and brushing the cylinder hat which is as inevitable a badge of office to the respectable medical man of to-day as the gold-headed cane to the one of yesterday or the day before.

"I had not appreciated that fact completely till you brought the slimy spirit of a damp omnibus in with you."

"Luxurious brute! You have been sitting all day before a comfortable fire,

massacring unhappy female novelists, with a pipe in your mouth; and then you rail on really useful and philanthropic members of the community who have borne the cold, and the rain, and the noxious exhalations of a wet London day in alleviating the sufferings of their fellow-man."

"If you mean to be oratorical on philanthropy to me, I shall be seen shortly 'waling my fellow-man,' as well as 'calling him an ass, at least to all intent.' Your usefulness I shall begin to believe in when I see a marked alteration in the death-rate—you know in which direction I mean. Your philanthropy will do very well in lectures and newspapers as an advertisement—not good enough here."

Charlie had now for some little time past shared Caspar's chambers in the old Inn, finding the plan agreeable and convenient to both and a distinct improvement on that

vista of desolation called Great Brown Street. He emptied his pockets of note-books and stethoscopes, and continued: "I think this part of the world is going back to the primordial slime out of which Huxley and Haeckel say it sprang. I wish they would not always choose weather like this to hook up the pavements in, though, and spread wooden trestles with red lanterns on them for the fun of seeing the traveller tumble over them. Got a genuine case of Addison's disease: Carpenter and I tossed for it, I've got it."

"And this is what he calls philanthropy, I suppose. I think weather of this sort has its advantages. It gives half of the population an excuse for staying in public-houses they would otherwise feel a moral discomfort in remaining in."

Here Charlie spake at large on various unpleasant diseases and modes of alleviating

the same, which may possibly be of the nature of caviare to the general reader, and then, having exhausted all his hospital topics, reverted by an irresistible fascination to the weather.

"Oh, bother the weather!" retorted Caspar. "Draw the blinds down, light a pipe, and converse on rational subjects, or hold your tongue."

"What have you done all day?"

"I've written a few things, and thought a few more. I have been wondering why people are always so fervently and rashly recommended in sermons, moral lectures, and the like, to lean implicitly on that infallible and portable moral pedometer and compass which they call Conscience. When the majority of humanity throughout all time have more usually gone wrong than right in their judgments, in their taste, in their sense of colour and sound, in their comprehension and

digestion as well, I want to know why their subjective criteria of conduct should be worth more attention?"

"Most people don't pay it much, anyhow. I say, I've bought some Sally Lunns for tea."

"Very nice of you. One would think we were two elderly maiden ladies. We ought to have a cat."

"By Jove we must have a cat. We will put aside a tithe weekly in a bag, lay up a fund in fact, wherewith to purchase meat."

Caspar stood before the fire with his hands in his pockets and his back against the mantelshelf, contemplating a table laden with books, magazines, and pieces of paper. After a while, he said:

"Have you been at the house in Kensington, lately?"

"I was there yesterday afternoon—I had a few hours to spare, as Andrew MacPherson didn't lecture. I took tea there."

"It never occurred to you to mention it before?"

"I didn't think I had anything to tell which you would care to hear."

"Had you anything to tell I would not care to hear?"

"Only confirmation of what I always said, which I suppose you admit by this time, that that girl's marriage was a beastly error, that she knows it, that he knows it, and that the devil knows what chaos they will drift to."

"Go on, explain. You go there often and know more about it than I do, who have only been once or twice since they settled there."

"She has left off liking George Farringdon. That is the natural result of prolonged intimacy with him. He is not a man, it appears, who improves on acquaintance. And he is not such a fool as not to feel that he is a smashed idol—and he doesn't like the sensation. And he has got into his small mind the idea that

his wife is willing and ready to receive some *cavalier servente* who will be more interesting than G.M.F. And his behaviour is curious. I think he must have adopted the rather crude notion, that he will make matters more satisfactory by attempts to provoke her jealousy. I speak in plain and vulgar language—by getting a little game on elsewhere."

"Where?"

Charlie looked uncomfortable, as an honourable man telling the "lie pious" generally does, and replied: "How should I know? I don't take an interest in his pursuits, beyond so far as the bare facts affect the lady I am sorry for. He is also more inclined, by simple irritation, to indulge in the flowing bowl, and his appearance is thicker, older, and less attractive. Getting a complexion like those seasoned club men you see loafing in Piccadilly about 12.30 in

the day. He still wears beautiful clothes and smokes cigarettes. I should like to have him to myself in the middle of a ring for ten minutes. And by Jove! I'd think you deserve a d—d hiding too, for making such a melancholy, shortsighted ass of yourself at Schlangenberg!"

"My dear fellow, you are right and I was wrong. You predicted on instinct perhaps—so did I. You thought you spoke and acted from the depth of your convictions —so did I. Shows how much this conscience they all rave about is to be relied on as a monitor. We walk like Alpine climbers, along a narrow ridge, all the days of our life, with a precipice on each side. We go with the darkness before us, and the cruellest part of all is that we are roped together in groups, so that the slip of one brings ten to the abysmal catastrophe. Best to cut the rope fore and aft, as some do, perhaps. And

I would give the sight of my eyes to have one of those days over there in Schlangenberg again. There never were days like those—and there never will be again. Have you any more to say on this matter?"

"Her only friends in the world are my people—my cousin Lily in particular. You know what her relations are—and now you know what her husband is—we must stick by her—until she wants it no more."

"What do you mean?"

"She is looking rather more fragile than ever. *Verb. sap.*"

"How—why is that? You know something of your profession, I suppose—give me a guess."

"She suffers from the reflection on her naturally delicate general system, of the prolonged nervous shock of accumulated annoyance and disappointment for one thing."

"Is it likely to grow worse—physically?"

"Yes, if she is not relieved somehow."

"What would relieve her? Shall I shoot him?"

Charlie looked at Caspar through his eye-glass critically, with the experience of five or six hospital sessions expressed in his calm demeanour.

"Not a bad idea. But the shock would make her worse—more vulnerable, more predisposed to some attack of some disease, I mean. No. There are two things that will cure her. One more surely than the other. One is the getting of what she wants——"

"And that is?"

"The love of the man who has left her alone to drift into the body of this death, when he might have saved her from it. Man! She would be healthier and happier with you this day in a court off Gray's Inn Lane among Irishmen and *tuberculosis bacilli* than living in the burden of bought upholstery with

that d—d snipe. There, that's my notion. Work upon that."

"You said two things would set her right. What is the other?"

"Death. If anyone ever had seeds of phthisis she has."

Caspar walked up and down the room.

"Hark!" said Charlie, "human tread on the stairs."

"Go out and see if it is Mrs. Murphy, and tell her to lay the table for tea."

"All right — Good Lord! Look here, Caspar."

And a young lady in black with a racoon tippet, and a very wet shiny umbrella, a rather brief-kilted skirt, and very muddy boots (which it did not occur to her to wipe), lounged into the room, remarking: "We have come to see you—and want some tea. How do you do, Mr. Rosenfeld?" Caspar had risen with a rather bewildered smile, which

turned into an almost transfixed look when he saw behind Miss Carew—of course it was she—the calm grey eyes, fair pale face, and small stately fur-clad form of Dick Farringdon. Miss Deane brought up the rear, saying:

"I hope you won't consider us as intruders, Mr. Rosenfeld, but I happened to remember as we were going along Holborn—we have been to see St. Paul's—that Charlie had forgotten some neuralgia medicine for me, and Lily insisted on our invading Barnard's Inn—I'm afraid we are rather like locusts—and Lily did not think of mentioning that these chambers were yours as well as Charlie's."

"Which was like Lily," observed Charlie, helping that young lady to remove her tippet, and taking charge of the hat which she cast casually into a bookshelf.

"I knew from Charlie you lived in Barnard's Inn, but, not being a Londoner,

I thought it was a great place like Lincoln's Inn, where our solicitor lives, and till I saw your name on the door had no idea you lived together."

"And I did not know it, Mr. Rosenfeld," said Dick.

"All these apologies are quite unnecessary," replied Caspar, "and it has fortunately occurred to Charlie to bring in some Sally Lunns, on which we will shortly have a mild debauch. Tell Mrs. Murphy to borrow some extra tea-cups, Charlie; shout down the stairs and see if she's come."

"I'm awfully sorry I forgot your toothache stuff, Aunt Lucy."

"Neuralgia, dear, please."

"Much the same thing from the professional standpoint."

"Charlie gets us physic at trade prices," remarked Lily, "so we are taking advantage of the occasion of being in London to lay in a

stock. We mean to choose different forms of pestilence to be stricken with all the winter, so as to get our money's worth."

"I think you have grown, Miss Carew," observed Caspar.

"Sir, I am grown up."

"Indeed. And you are becoming vastly witty."

"He always tries to irritate me," said Lily, explanatorily to Dick, "by pretending to treat me as a child, and thinks it funny."

Here Charlie's voice was heard in loud colloquy with Mrs. Murphy on the next landing. Lily continued:

"How funnily you live here! Do you always use somebody else's tea-things?"

"Only when visitors, with the happy digestion and catholic appetite peculiar to those of tender years, are brought to see us by their kind friends."

"Very well, Mr. Rosenfeld. I shall take

down all this, and it will be liable to be used against you at your trial."

"You won't when I tell you you shall have some blackberry jam by-and-by."

"And cream?"

"And cream. In a saucer. On the hearth-rug. We were just saying we missed a kitten here."

"Mr. Rosenfeld!" And the offended brunette drew herself up to a commanding five feet three.

"Miss Carew?"

"You are very irreverent. I will take deadly vengeance for this."

> "O gentle lady, do not put me to't
> For I am nothing, if not critical."

"The table looks as if you had been critical to-day," observed Dick, pointing to the little pile of three-volume novels and miscellaneous "copy" on the table.

"I have not been venomous this morning, Mrs. Farringdon. My fangs were drawn by a lady who had written a book that was interesting and manly, without being either *risqué* or a small-beer chronicle. There it is. You can take it away if you like, if you have not read it."

"But do they become yours, after reviewing?"

"Yes. If I like."

"Thank you. I will take it. I shall read what you say about it afterwards."

"May I ask how you will know where to find my notice?"

"Oh, I always see your notices. We get *The Investigator* every Saturday."

"But I mean, how do you know which are mine?"

"That is an easy one," said Charlie. "I tell her. Ask another."

"What a quantity of books you have!"

exclaimed Miss Deane. "I go to them like an animal to its prey."

"None of yours have come across me yet, Miss Deane — I'm looking forward to it. I have purchased a new, bright, and incisive steel pen, and am keeping it for you."

"I hope you won't get the chance of using it. I don't like your reviews of lady novelists. They always make me turn tremulously over the leaves of Lindley Murray, or of a French dictionary."

"Have you a prejudice against female authors?" asked Dick, scanning the titles in Caspar's bookshelves.

"Not at all. But I have against their weak points."

"Which be they?"

"Composition, knowledge of the marriage and other laws, their own and other languages, heroic male anatomy——"

"Such as 'nerves standing out like whip-cord,' and 'pulsating veins,'" put in Charlie.

"Well, *my* pulse is a vein, I'm sure," said Lily, dogmatically. "I feel it."

Charlie felt it, and replied:

"With all deference to your superior knowledge of the subject—(that's sarcastic)—I must continue to affirm that your pulse is not a vein. It is not even in a vein. At any rate, you are in a very abnormal condition if it is, and had better call at the hospital to-morrow and be dissected. Jerry and I will toss for the job."

"Oh, Charlie! Don't be nasty. Go away. Boo!"

"The great fault of your nephew, Miss Deane," said Caspar, "is that he will talk professional shop at all times and seasons. I jeer and make remarks about Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen in vain."

"May I look at this book of ballads?" asked Dick. Caspar went to the bookcase.

"Of course. Let me take it down. Won't you let Charlie carry it home for you by-and-by. You might like to look at it at your leisure. He's dying for an excuse like that to walk home with his cousin," added Caspar, in a lower tone, with his wily variety of smile.

"Oh—you are very kind"—Dick looked into Caspar's face—"I believe you would let me take the whole bookcase if I wanted."

"Certainly. In a Taylor's van. And," he added, on a sudden impulse, turning over the leaves, and speaking lower, "you can always have all I can give or lend—from life downwards—do you know that?"

She replied in a low voice:

"Yes—I know—that." Then she added louder, "I wanted to see if this has any of the ballads I know in it. I have never for-

gotten them. When you have ever heard a Scotch ballad told or sung to you, as a child, in Scotland, Mr. Rosenfeld, you never forget it as long as you live. Still, I daresay you know more of them than I do."

"Bring them to the light. Find me the one you like best." Dick obeyed in the most natural, child-like, matter-of-course way.

"Which do you like best?" he said; "I like the sad ones."

"I generally like the ferocious ones. But you search for yourself. I'll proclaim the one I like best by-and-by."

"I like 'Kinmont Willie' best," said Charlie.

"I like 'Robin Hood,'" said Lily.

"I'm glad to hear that, Miss Carew. I like 'Robin Hood,'" said Caspar. "I don't care if he was a Solar myth, I like him."

"Solar myth! Bosh," observed Charlie. "Robin Hood was a jolly good fellow, who

had a good broad sword and 'took dunts frae naebody.' He did more good than Cœur-de-lion—was a pleasanter and more socially estimable person."

"What is a Solar myth?" asked Lily.

"A Solar myth, my dear child," replied Charlie, "is a story. Mrs. Harris was one. The recipe is simple. Take any important or unimportant historical personage of more than a century ago, and find other ones like him in different lands. Mix well together, find discreditable details about him, and serve up hot. For instance: John Smith loved Bessie Brown. So did Tommy Black. These things being thus, the latter punched the former's head, and fractured the base of his skull, so that he died. Jessie went to the funeral, and drove back from it with Black, fainting in his arms, on a jaunting car. Very well. Mark now, how a plain tale shall put you down, Max Müller.

"In the Danish legend, the female character wears her red kirtle and comes home in a boat. In the Sanscrit poem of Jâsya Brasnâ she walks over the sea at eve, shod with golden sandals — these Indian fellows are always poetic. The Chinese romance of "Je-se-bro-ne" is in twelve quarto volumes, written long-ways in black splashes of paint, down six columns on each page of thin rice paper—but it all comes to the same thing. The explanation of the parable is so obvious that the meanest intellect must accept it, and generally does when told to by a persuasive or peremptory Solar mythologist.

"Jessie, poor girl, is the Evening red—or the Dawn, all the same. J. Smith is the sun. Black is—naturally—the Night—takes a female form in some varieties of the Smith myth. The kirtle is the hue of the sunset (here, in your lecture or essay be eloquently picturesque). The boat, or horse-car, is, of

course, the descending chariot of Phœbus. The gold sandals will (or rather won't, as you don't know it) remind you of a line of modern poetry.

Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold.

Such in the rough is a Solar myth."

"It's very pretty," said Lily, "I nearly cry when I think of it."

"Is that the proper scientific method, Mr. Rosenfeld?" asked Miss Deane.

"Charlie knows just enough about these subjects to turn them into a stumbling-block and a derision. But the Smyth myth is a fair enough caricature."

Enter Mrs. Murphy, with an untied black bonnet, an astonished expression, and the tea-things. When she had gone, after spreading the table and setting down the butter-dish with a determined and offended bump, Lily settled down in front of the fire on the floor

with a toasting-fork, the Sally Lunns, and full command of the butter. She turned round leaning on Dick's knees, who was turning over the ballad-book by the firelight in one of the elderly and decrepit armchairs, and said: "Isn't this a jolly sort of life, Dick? Wouldn't it be grand if you and I had some chambers to ourselves, and an old woman with rusty silk bonnet-strings to wait on us?"

"What would you do with yourselves?" asked Caspar, who was standing at the opposite corner of the mantelpiece watching the process.

"I think I should collect books and read them," said Dick, "while Lily practised cookery."

"Wouldn't our names look grand, painted in black over the door!"

While this mild mirth proceeded, Caspar looked down at Dick in the fireside arm-

chair, with the light falling on her bent-down head as she talked to Lily or inspected her book. And he remembered how, during the maddened melody of the "Wedding March" so long ago—perhaps a century ago—he had had a mental vision of that head in that chair, as one of the things which might never be. And here it was now, come with the mockery of one of those heavenly dreams in time of sore trouble, which leave the dreamer worse off than before. Dick Farringdon walked, and talked, and sat, and ate, and drank, and laughed in these his rooms. It seemed scarcely possible to him who heard, as it were, far away the teasing tones of Lily the irrepressible, who was born under a laughing star, and the good-natured badinage of Charlie Deane, that this delicate embodiment of some fairy legend should be sitting before his fire in all her graceful *noli me tangere* purity, her quiet appreciation of

innocent fun, with that fair, gentle face, whose expression the last few months of quiet endurance had transformed to that of grown womanhood. She had gained experience and lost strength. There, in that rickety old cretonne armchair, sat the one love of his whole life, beyond the reach of hope. His whole desire was to give her peace and happiness, his whole delight in procuring her some temporary fraction of them, and his destiny apparently to fail. For the more they saw of each other, the more they felt the barren hopelessness of the separate path honour compelled each to follow, with the ravens of fate and time waiting, hovering, and croaking ominously above them.

"This is one of my favourite ballads, Mr. Rosenfeld," said she, "'Helen of Kirkconnell.' Here are several more too, I am very fond of, like that of 'Mary Hamilton.'"

"You have selected the best poem almost

in the Scotch language. It combines the pathos of one class of ballad with the terrible ferocity of the other, and the wonderful poetry of both. I like—next to that—'Edom of Gordon.'" Caspar did not explain why.

And he turned away on a pretence of arranging books to hide the expression he felt came into his face as he muttered inwardly and almost inaudibly:

> "And in the Gordon's foul heart blude
> He's Wroken his fair ladye."

Then, tea having been consumed, Miss Deane gave the signal for departure. "Will you come with us, Mr. Deane?" said Dick, "I want you to carry these books for me—if I may have them?"

"Of course," replied Caspar. "Here they are, Charlie. Don't drop them, and take care of your party. It's night in the streets."

"Holborn and Oxford Street are pretty safe, I think," said Dick, smiling.

"I don't know," said Charlie seriously.

"Why, be there bears in the town?"

"Mrs. Farringdon, don't! It is quite bad enough to live with a man who has Shakespeare at his finger's ends."

"Ah! I occasionally flout old ends too, Mr. Rosenfeld," she added, as they descended the narrow wooden stairs of the old Inn. "I am much obliged for a pleasant evening I didn't expect."

"I hope you are not going to make a little speech, like the well-behaved children who say, 'Thank you for a pleasant evening!' by direction, when they leave a party?"

"And I think I must thank you," she said, "for something else. I hope to get George to take your advice about the Manor House. He is a little dubious yet, but a word or two from you, I think, will settle it. Will you

kindly speak that word or two when you see him?"

This was provocative of a strange mixture of anger and pity in Caspar. Anger that her comfort and peace should depend upon the decision of such a man as George, pity that she should ask for the help of a stranger to guide the erring and undecided steps of that young man. He simply said, "I will," as he stood at the foot of the steps, watching the forms of Charlie and Lily departing, with Miss Deane behind them. And Dick vanished too, and the sooty old trees looked sootier and lonelier than ever when she had gone, pointing with stiff, black, slender fingers at the unattainable stars.

CHAPTER VI.

"EXPERIMENTUM IN CORPORE VILI."

CASPAR returned to his chambers, and stood with his back to the fire, gazing abstractedly at the tea-table, with its disorder of cups, plates, crumbs, and open books.

He stood still a long time, his hands in his pockets, his back against the high and narrow wooden mantelshelf, apparently plunged in thought. And his reflections were something of this order:

"I wonder what I shall make of all this? Some of my friends would say, 'Make copy of it.' That I don't suppose I shall do, at any rate, just now. I don't seem to hanker

after selling my love to printers—though Heaven knows what other use or benefit it is to anybody. Is this Honour we all rave about so much more use in this case, really, after all? Why should not we—I at least—do what nature dictates, and see Honour and everything else at the devil, and have happiness instead? Eh—let us see to the bottom of this whirlpool. Love pulls one way, Honour pulls the other. Let Reason judge between them. Desire says, Fly away to—well, to anywhere out of the way of adverse criticism and heavy tradesmen's bills—say Schlangenberg, persuading Her in a cunningly-chosen moment to come too. Accelerate that young man's collapse, by helping him with my advice to squander his substance on the Chosen People and the Midianitish woman—wonder who she is? When he has descended the ladder to the perdition which awaits him, pull it up out of reach—they

would do that for him. Rescue her from her despair, and let the old hens of society cackle over it as they list, and as they dare. Does Love say that? If so, is it love of Her, or of one Caspar Rosenfeld, of Barnard's Inn? Reason is an awkward cross-examiner. Honour says, to start with, Love must be unselfish. Here, I fear, Honour betrays a lamentable ignorance of human nature. Then it says, respect the woman you love, do not persuade her to that which will lose her her own respect, and perhaps yours. If she can endure what seems to you hard, you must endure surely as much as she can. The worse her fate, the more noble her endurance is, the more deserving of your love she becomes, and the more tender of the stainless majesty of her innocency must you be. Reason clenches the matter by saying that Love and Honour in opposition is an impossible condition, both being rightly under-

stood. Caspar Rosenfeld says that he is left, between them, very much where he was before, and that all they said has been stated much more lucidly before by many people." And he lit a pipe, cleared the table, put the crockery into the small recess which served as a pantry, and, after walking about the room awhile, sat down with the book of ballads open on the table before him at the place where Dick had last been reading it.

A step came up the stair. Too early to be Charlie returning. A knock came at the door.

Charlie never knocked.

"Come in!"

A man entered, respectably dressed, with certain foreign touches in the form of his collar, and the black bow on his breast below it, and the cut of his overcoat. A person with short reddish hair, a small waxed moustache, and no very particular facial

character beyond smallish eyes, mobile eyebrows, and a rather large sharp-edged nose which supported spectacles. A person a trifle below the average height, who carried his hat in one hand, and presented a large glazed card with the other, as he bowed in the sudden manner peculiar to the Gothic races, drawing his heels together with a click. "Dr. Julius Van Westerdijk" Caspar read on the card. Watching his visitor's face, as he took the shade off the lamp, he seemed to read something there too, in a language which was not wholly untranslatable. "Mr. Caspar Rosenfeld!"

"Well?" said Caspar shortly, rising and standing again before the fire.

"I represent Messrs. Marsden & Co., of Craven Court," continued the stranger in a marked Teuto-Batavic accent. There was a Mephistophelian suddenness about his appearance.

"Do you? I daresay you represent them very well," replied Caspar drily. Dr. Van Westerdijk bowed and looked flattered. He did not know English tones quite well enough to readily distinguish the gibe serious-ironic from the compliment serious-sincere.

"Yes. I am directed to call on you to inform you, dat we have been advisit—" ("Beautifully begun!" reflected Caspar—"Legal introduction in Anglo-Dutch") "that our client, Mr. George Farringdon——"

"Your what?"

"Our client. Yes."

Dr. Van Westerdijk had a peculiar and rather irritating habit of using the word "Yes," as a kind of incidental interjection.

"Dat Mr. Farringdon has been told tings about us vich is slanters, libels. Dat you have told him to make ofer his estate to his wäife. Yes!" The Doctor got more eloquent and less English as he proceeded.

"Dat I have been sent to inquire if all tis is true vot you say to eem—I mean if you did say to eem vot he say you say to eem."

"Whom can the ass have babbled all this to?" thought Caspar, meaning by the ass George Farringdon.

"Have you? And what do you expect me to tell you?"

"Vot you tell eem about us?" This rapidly and sharply. Caspar was still pulling at his pipe, and leaning on the mantelshelf.

"I don't see the slightest reason for telling you anything. However, I don't mind repeating to you a few of my expressions concerning 'us,' as you call it, meaning by 'us,' I suppose, Marsden & Co."

"Yes!"

"I said that the firm was unscrupulous and extortionate. The statement was not original on my part. I was quoting from

the words of the Bench at a certain county court where Marsden & Co. figured in the person of a solicitor's firm called Silber & Schlick. Curious the number of foreign names that seemed connected with Marsden & Co. Do you want any more of my remarks? You are welcome to such as I can remember, and can take them down here in black and white. I'll give you facilities."

"You do not spik to de point. No!" said the Doctor, rather angrily.

"I am tame, sir. Pronounce."

"Tid you use your influence to persuade Mr. Farringdon to make ofer his estate in trust to someone, so dat it could not be seized while dat someone vos aläife?"

"I did."

"Well, Marsden & Co. request you to hold your tong about tem, and keep your opinions to yourself and advise you to influ-

ence Mr. Farringdon, who means to consult you again about it, to gif op dat idea."

"All the which is like Messrs. Marsden & Co.'s cheek. And supposing I accept this warning, what will they do for me?"

"Anything. Tere is a nice advowson for sale we have got—you would have it dirt cheap—sell it if you don't like it—some Christian vould give plenty for it. We could get you on in journalism too."

"I see. And supposing I don't?"

"We take proceedings."

"Sounds formidable—very formidable."

"Yes!"

"What does it mean?"

The little foreigner grew concentrated and ferocious.

"It means we'll tell you somting you don't know! It means I am proprietor of *De Infestigator* and *De Lamp* you get all your little moneys from, or most of it, and

I'll strike you off the staff, and get dem to write down in reviews in half te papers of London votever you write anywhere till everybody is afraid to employ you, and we vill not haf you interfering with us—No! And you will be just starfd out, and serf you damn right. Yes!"

"Your threats are more definite than your promises."

"Dey will be—to you—if you don't look out."

Caspar laughed a little, and thought: "Here is my opportunity to kick Farringdon down that ladder to ruin I was thinking of just now, and of profiting into the bargain."

"Tink!" said the foreigner. "It's bad business quarrelling wit *De Infestigator*. Vot do *you* tink?"

Dr. Van Westerdijk seemed to pride himself on his acquaintance with town slang,

and to have principally associated with persons who used it.

The *Infestigator* suggested some scaly aquatic monster when pronounced by him.

"I will ponder the question," said Caspar. "In the meantime, my learned friend, let me ask you a few questions, just to give your mind occupation. Which was your university?"

"Oh—Leiden."

"In what faculty did you graduate?"

"Philosofee."

"In what year?"

"In de year—de year '74."

"Have you a list for 1874?"

"Yes. You could find my name dere."

"I daresay. I thought your name too good a one for you to have invented."

"Vot you mean?"

"I mean that you were quite right to copy a chance name, instead of drawing on

your imagination for an unverifiable one. Very sharp of you."

"I consider you mean to insolt me!"

"Consider anything you like."

"You shall prove your words."

"I will. I say that in '74 you were not Dr. Van Westerdijk. Shall I tell you why?"

"Väiy?" The learned stranger's eyes looked shifty behind those glasses. "I do not know at all vot you mean. I tink you are mat."

"Because as late as August last year you were Julius Bloemendaal, and a d——d snipe you looked. So you do now for the matter of that, though you appear to have risen in the world since then."

"It is a lie!"

The Doctor's expression became very unpleasant.

"You don't give the lie with conviction.

You should practice that a little. You can go now, and tell Marsden & Co. that I shall always be glad to warn guileless and affluent youth against their pleasing allurements. Tell the head of the firm—you mark me, the head of the firm—that his messenger has given a good deal more information than he has received. If it hadn't been for you, Julius Bloemendaal, Westerdijk, etc., I should not have guessed that Marsden & Co. was an old acquaintance of mine, living at 29, Castle Street. Never mind how and why."

"I believe you are de devil. But you are an awful fool; we'll starf you, man."

"Thanks. In the meantime get out, and don't come back."

Bloemendaal (for he Westerdijk was—shaven, shorn, and properly dressed, but always a Rotterdam Jew) was angry, and puzzled, and admiring all at once, and said

in a rash moment, as he opened the door:

"If you vill stand in, you shall have de young woman, Mrs. F., all to yourself. We'll take care of eem."

It has been hinted that Caspar Rosenfeld was rather a tall man. He was also a strong man, and given at various periods to gymnastics of a quaint and Germanic though effective kind, as well as to boxing and fencing. He was spasmodic in his practice of these diversions, and never in training, but he was energetic and wiry. After his last unfortunate utterance, Mr. Julius Bloemendaal (by no means a formidable antagonist to anyone) found himself seized by the collar behind and actively propelled through the doorway towards the top of the stairs. A series of sudden and remarkable phenomena were then observed by him. He first felt the violent impact

of a hard body on the part of his person anatomically known as the *gluteus maximus* muscle. He then was assaulted by a railing and a wall which rose at his head, and a floor which spun round with him with terrible velocity. He also distinctly saw the fall of more than one meteoric body through the air. What happened then he was not sure. The next thing he remembered was finding himself in a reclining attitude on the stairs, with his right foot through what had been a tall cylinder hat. His spectacles were broken too; but as he saw equally well without them, and in fact had had them made of flat glass, cheap, at a little place in Goodge Street by Fitzroy Square, that was not of so much consequence. The hat, which was in the latest fashion and cost five-and-sixpence and a couple of Cubas of Dutch growth, at Simmons', down High Street, Whitechapel, was a more serious

loss. Besides, it is injurious to the dignity of a great and respectable firm that its commissioner should parade Holborn decorated as to his head with what looks like a second-hand concertina, partly open.

He did a sort of war-dance on the pavement of Barnard's Inn, shouting anathemas of many kinds.

To parody a once popular song at the music halls:

> He cursed him in Hebrew,
> He cursed him in Dutch,
> He cursed him various ways.

Caspar, having shut his outer door, so that the entry was pervious only to such as held latchkeys, opened the window, and looked out, his elbows on the sill, his pipe hanging from the corner of his mouth, his long black hair tossed by the breeze of the night, and a gentle smile playing round his mouth.

"Do you know vot you haf done?" shrieked the injured one below.

"*Experimentum in corpore vili.* A doctor of Leiden can translate that."

And Caspar shut the window, and retired to his table, and recommenced the study of first, ballads, then an old and particularly rare "Ben Jonson," in which he tried to immerse his mind, and found the attempt a total failure. He read Bloemendaal for Bobadil, and Barnard's Inn for New Inn. When Charlie returned, pretty late, inquiring why the outer door was "sported," Caspar replied:

"Sit down, and I'll tell you."

And he told him.

Charlie whistled. Then he said:

"The *dénouement* is very satisfactory, anyhow. I wish I had arrived when he was below outside! By Jove, I am sorry I missed him. Lucky I spotted him on the boat."

"This is not the *dénouement*, unfortunately, my boy. It is only the end of an act. I have got to look for retribution now. I have taken certain steps already. While you were out, after this intelligent young Dutchman's departure, I wrote to the editors of the two papers, that I would be glad if they would send cheques for arrears—(sounds dignified—means very little)—as I declined to supply further contributions. That message will arrive by the earliest post to-morrow, and will meet the Dutchman when he comes to discharge his thunderbolts, converting the latter into damp fireworks."

"That's burning your ships and no mistake. Better than letting the enemy sink 'em."

"What may follow, we can discuss at length at some other time."

"It will be rather serious for you, won't it?"

"It will. And I mean to make it serious for them if I can. They have chosen to make war. I accept it. They may bring me to lodge in the Dials, or even in St. James's Park—but they can't make me hold my tongue. And that is what they mostly dread. I will use all my might, for Dick's sake, to keep that unhappy idiot out of this last mess he is trying to get into, and I will make things as warm for Marsden & Co. as I can. Pleasant family mine, certainly. I'll trot out its history in its entirety—see how Marsden & Co. like that. I have left that man alone to pursue his own path, for comprehensible reasons, hitherto. He has chosen to forget all mercy and humanity, to say nothing of all honour and honesty, and to do the cruellest act he could think of to me, as well as to others; and lastly, to send a scoundrel to splash the mud of his meanness on the skirts of a sweet and innocent lady, and now,

by the God of Abraham, I will not leave him alone!"

"Don't get in such a passion, man, I daresay it will come all right, ultimately."

"What is the use of talking like that? I am not made of leather, with veins running salt water, like half your Normans, and Angles, and Picts, and other barbarians! Calmness won't keep us out of all the chaos that is coming. Still, let us be calm. Charlie, you will go in with me? I must make selection of such friends as I can depend on.

Never so few, and never yet more need!"

"I say, who is this Marsden that you make such a row about?" asked Charlie, with some anxiety.

"Nathan Rosenfeld, my father. His real and private address always was the one you saw in Bloemendaal's pocket Bible. That is

what attracted my attention at the time. I was born there."

"Good Lord! Excuse my remarks on calmness, old man, but of course I go in with you. And—damn it, I think you might admit some energy and some courage and some faith in us Angles and Picts and other barbarians!"

"I do, my young friend, I do. It's all right. But they are made of leather pretty often, all the same. Never mind, it's a good resisting fabric. Now approach

"The ragged'st hour that time and spite dare bring!"

After a few days Caspar received the small sums owing to him from *The Lamp* and *Investigator* respectively, and proceeded to expend the same in the discharge of various small debts, principally at the grocer's and tobacconist's and the old house bulging with old books in Clement's Lane, where he occa-

sionally was tempted. Having recently acquired the complete works of Voltaire and of Swift, he had to pay a bill of forty-three shillings and sixpence. Before his severance from the periodical publications above-named, this had appeared ridiculously little to pay for so much, but now, having no longer the prospect of constant employment at good pay, it seemed ridiculously much to pay for so little.

Having satisfied himself that he was now free from fear of bills, and owed no man anything, he walked placidly back to his chambers, jingling, with his hand in his left trouser-pocket, the sum of nine and sevenpence, the capital on which his future career was to be supported.

It was about five on a hideous November afternoon with a fog and an east wind, Charlie had just come back, snorting, coughing, and cursing, from the scene of his daily toil,

and was restoring himself with the warmth of the blazing coal fire and a small dose of whisky. Caspar poured his remaining silver and copper money on the table. Charlie turned round :

"What are you doing?" said he.

"You see this interesting numismatic collection?"

"Well?"

"It is all the money I have in this best of all possible worlds."

"I can lend you two or three quid for a while, if you mean that."

"Yes, of course. But I don't mean that. I don't know whether, when, or where I can earn any more just now. Luckily there isn't a quarter-day here for another month or so. And in a month all sorts of things may happen."

Part the Seventh.

THE NET GATHERED IN.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE SKELTON STREET.

Little Skelton Street is situate in the populous and unfashionable parish of St. Giles, and serves as a kind of overflow pipe to Big Skelton Street, in which luggage-laden four-wheelers on their way to Euston and King's Cross, vegetable vans on their way to Covent Garden, hansoms theatre-bound from Bloomsbury, omnibuses plying between Charing Cross and Tottenham Court Road, costermongers' carts, penny ice-stalls, chestnut, whelk, and potato trucks create a tolerably permanent congestion. Little Skelton

Street is narrow, and its houses are tall and old, mostly provided with attics, in the windows of which caged birds and small hanging gardens are generally to be detected. The chaste architectural monotony of Bloomsbury is not found here. The houses are of different heights, and can be individually distinguished. They shoulder one another like an ill-drilled squad of recruits who have not yet been arranged according to their heights. The ground-floors are mostly occupied by shops, where trades of a more useful than attractive nature are carried on. You can get letters of glass and porcelain here to stick on windows—such letters as you see disposed in graceful curves on the fronts of public-houses advertising "Martell, Hennessy, & Co.'s Brandy," and "Dunville & Co.'s best Whisky." You can also get coffins cheap and wholesale—reduction on taking a dozen—as well as dry colours for grinding,

tin cooking utensils, locks and hinges, second-hand—or second-foot—boots, seven-and-sixpenny ulsters, fit guaranteed, genuine pork sausages, tobacco, and *The Police News* (the two latter at the same establishment). The most interesting and artistic establishment is the one whose window exhibits grinning masks, trick-wigs, bottled spangles and orient pearls, red shoes, green satin cloaks, and glittering swords and helmets. For this is a theatrical neighbourhood. Drury Lane is the nearest home of the drama. Little Skelton Street being only eighty yards long has only three public-houses, a corner one at each end and one in the middle, R. L. and C., as stage directions tersely express it. But not Little Skelton Street alone is supplied by these, or they might appear disproportionately numerous. Every few feet on either side shows the orifice of a court, "rent," "yard,"

"buildings," or "passage," whitewashed at the mouth, apparently in order to give the dirt a fair chance of showing itself, and this short street makes up for its shortness by possessing vast receding depths of a more or less habitable nature on either side, which show that it is only an artery whose lateral capillaries can hold at least twice as many people as the mere frontage building. Little Skelton Street is only the central duct of an extensive system of ramifications. The life goes on in the crowded branches and recesses. At the dark entrance of each court lounge a little crowd on fine summer evenings, specimens of what the inside can produce in far greater numbers if it chooses to try, or if anything disturbs it. An ants' nest usually has a few lazily moving sentinels at the surface. Graze it with your foot, and the ground is black with them. And they can sting. If you look inside you will

see women seated on doorsteps nursing children, and conversing on topics of the day with one another, and exchanging opinions and relating facts of a nature quite peculiar to the locality, and calculated to puzzle and bewilder the traveller. The males are mostly young — either children or lads just old enough to have coarse loud voices. They have pale, dirty faces, and red eyelids. They open cab-doors in the Strand, sell newspapers, black boots, and gambol sweetly on the Thames Embankment on Sunday afternoons. If they are strong enough, they assault unprotected and feeble-looking wayfarers when they find an opportunity. They subsist largely on herrings, tripe, whelks, high meat bought cheap on Saturday night, or stolen from the butchers' stalls down in the not far distant Dials, gin and beer. They prefer the two latter forms of refreshment. When they cannot afford the necessary, they

confine themselves to the superfluous. That is, they deny themselves food to get drink.

The street itself is shabby-genteel — at least it is undoubtedly shabby, and probably considers itself genteel, but the regions right and left of it are unmitigated "rookeries," and present in a complete form the terrible problem of retrogressive evolution — the Survival of the Unfit.

One fine May evening, about six, when the sky was growing warmly yellow, and the cry began to be heard of such as sold cats'-meat in the streets, when the cats stalked proudly in the wake of that cry, and the dogs grinned and ran about, divided in their minds between following the sweet and alluring fragrance of high liver in slices, and pursuing their traditional foes, the cats, Miss Ada Clarence appeared at the garret window of No. 37, and began to water the little row of flowers spread on the leaden parapet. She

also inspected and fed a canary, hanging out there at the side of the window, and addressed it as "sweet" and as "pretty Dick," formulæ which the bird endeavoured to repeat after her, receiving much encouragement thereto from his mistress. After this simple pastime, she turned her eyes toward the attic window of No. 36, on the opposite side, and seemed to be interested therein.

Miss Ada Clarence was a very pretty girl, tall, slender, well-shaped, blue-eyed, graceful —you will see many like her between six and seven in the evening, descending Endell Street or Bow Street, armed with a small bag or basket. She was an actress of burlesque, that is, she had recently been promoted from the chorus to a speaking part —two lines containing three puns. Malicious friends said the minute basket she carried contained her costume for the stage. She had no particular parent that she was aware

of, and supported herself by the use of the gifts with which nature had endowed her, namely, a good voice, a pretty face, keen wits, a merry heart, and a shapely form. And a very honest living she made. She liked fun, music, melodramas, lager-beer, and oysters. She was not of those who ride in victorias with the burden of unbought sealskin on their backs, and the burden of ruined young men (sitting very lightly) on their consciences. She lived alone in the attic in Skelton Street, with the flowers and the canary-bird. She had very few male friends, and they were gentlemen. They were gentlemen sometimes in very reduced circumstances too. But they managed to have little banquets sometimes, where the "wit was better than the wittles," as was remarked at one of them, and where she shared with a few carelessly clothed happy-go-lucky sons of science and literature, who were prepared to assault anyone who

spoke evil of or to her, that cheerful, but not very nourishing food, called *le pain bénit de la gaieté.*

Her name was, of course, not Clarence. What her real patronymic was—if she had one—no one knew. They talked of her as "Ada," or "the child." She had got on very well up to two-and-twenty without a surname. Perhaps somebody will give her his some day.

> Heureux qui mettre sa cocarde
> Au bonnet de Mimi Pinson!

There was one just now residing over the way in the attic of 36 who had been for some years—almost since she was a wild little girl who played hide-and-seek with London for a playground—a great friend of ners. In his prosperous days he had taken her to theatres, and shared with her many a pleasant supper afterwards, where the thirst-

bringing anchovies were antithetic to the thirst-quenching lager-beer. In his days of tribulation she had sometimes given him the same treat. They were not in love with each other. They scouted the notion. He never made a sentimental approach to her—and there seemed no room for sentimentalism in her.

He now seemed to be in a state of inordinate financial depression. So much so that he would not accept help from her. "That is a bad sign," she thought, "it means he has no hope of returning it." And he used to accept—only to return. He seemed to have lost a good deal of the careless gaiety which he used to display in her society, which so few people beside herself seemed able to awake in him. And this girl, who was above all sentiment, and considered love as described in books all nonsense, thought: "There must be some girl in the case; just

being hard up would never make him like that—it used rather to cheer him up than otherwise. I wonder what he is doing now? Writing, I suppose. He is always writing—he does it too much. Another bad sign. He used to be lazy. It must be some girl. And the poor fellow is trying to get rich—and when he tries for things he generally gets them. And then he will marry her, and all the good old times will be gone for ever. She is a swell, I suppose, and they will live in the suburbs or in the country, far away somewhere—and the jolly old times will just be something to dream about and forget as soon as—as soon as I can. And he will get respectable—and I shall get old, and ugly, and fat. Oh——"

She happened at this stage of her reflections to look down into the street, and beheld a quaint procession on the other side of it. First, with the serene pomp of a drum-major,

walked Thaddeus O'Rourke, Esq., bearing in his hands a large cage containing a grey parrot which emitted at frequent but always unexpected moments a loud and piercing squawk. Behind him Charley Deane with the shimmering, silvery, corrugated end of a large German sausage protruding from his coat-pocket. Beside him walked Jerry Carpenter carrying two bottles wrapped in newspapers. Behind walked Mr. Jack Miller, smoking a cheap cigar and carrying two more newspaper-clad bottles. A scarlet claw of a lobster protruded from his pocket where it was associated with a lettuce.

The procession halted at 36, knocked, and were admitted. A few minutes later two heads—Charlie's and Jerry Carpenter's—appeared at the open attic window and beckoned emphatically to Ada. She thought:

"I don't see him beckoning. He doesn't want me now. I sha'n't go." And she took

up some needlework and proceeded to prick her fingers severely in the effort to do one thing and attend to another. Then she determined to look at 36 no longer, and straightway put down her work and gazed—36-wards. Then a third head, a head with long black hair, a face with a queer, wrinkling smile on which the evening sun shone, appeared, and said :

"Ada ! Come over. You are wanted."

"I don't believe it," muttered she. "I won't go." And she snatched up a hat, put it hurriedly on, powdered her face, almost forgetting the farewell glance at the looking-glass, and went downstairs, and across the street, where the door was opened to her by —Caspar Rosenfeld. She was greeted upstairs by a welcoming cheer. On the table, among books and MSS., stood the bottles containing beer. Carpenter was hastily slicing the lettuce with a scalpel, previous to crack-

ing the resisting parts of the lobster with a pair of bone-forceps.

The parrot stood on the floor in a corner.

"I've brought a spakin' bord to cheer um up," remarked O'Rourke, explanatory. "I've taught um to whistle the 'Wearin' of the Green.' He swore naturally when I bought um, and has since learned to say, 'Sparragrass twopence a bundle,' and——"

Here the parrot interrupted, using (only too distinctly) language proving that he had been born and brought up in the neighbourhood of the Seven Dials, where, as is known to the London reader, naturalists do mostly congregate.

"Shot up, ye baste!"

"I say, Rosenfeld," said Miller, "if *The Lamp* tried to ruin you, O'Rourke has, we hope, succeeded in ruining *The Lamp*."

"Has he been writing in it?" asked Caspar pleasantly.

"He has been writing about it—and to rights. And I've declined to contribute further illustrations."

"Noble sacrifice!" said O'Rourke. "It was not until the Jew baste declined to contribute his salary, though."

"O'Rourke and I saw Van Westerdijk," added Miller, "and gave him large fragments of our mind. I don't think he has had such a thorough and respectable slating since you kicked him downstairs, which latter event, by the way, we have given full publicity to. It's nuts to the other weeklies."

"For these reliefs much thanks. My brains have been rather addled lately. I have been able to write nothing but verses, and there doesn't seem to be that mysterious thing called an opening for verses just now. I've got a volume of them in existence. One publisher has refused it already—says it's too morbid, or too cheerful, or too something else

—don't think I read his letter much more carefully than he reads my works. Another has had them now for weeks. Has them still. Never mind. It doesn't matter. Let us feast. Well Ada, how are you, and the dickie-bird?"

"We are very well, thanks. Why don't you take to the stage, Mr. Rosenfeld? I should think you might do something that way."

"I might make a decent gravedigger, perhaps."

"What a nice cheerful view you seem to take of things, Rosenfeld," observed Jack Miller, "we shall see you driving a hearse soon."

"I think I should feel more at home inside."

"Give us the privilege of post-morteming you first, old fellow," said Carpenter; "brains like yours ought not to be lost to the college."

"What a glorious immortality for this

gathering it will be if we are grouped together in pathological bottles some day," said Miller, "on a special shelf, all to ourselves. People will pay to see it."

"Ada, would you prefer picric acid? It is a nice becoming colour," suggested Charlie. "O'Rourke will, of course, be in absolute alcohol."

"If ye mean I'll be in liquor to all eternity, I scorn the insinuation—and——"

"And accept the conditions?"

"If you are all going to talk like this," said Ada, "I shall go home."

"Hear, hear!" said O'Rourke.

"Have you got a cruet-stand anywhere, Rosenfeld?" asked Carpenter.

"It's on the floor by that heap of books, along with a bottle of ink."

"Right. There isn't much vinegar; don't you think some temporary arrangement might be made with the ink? There is more ink

in this room than any other liquor, I think. Mademoiselle and gentlemen, the salad is made and the fatherly feast is spread. Here, let's drag the table into the window; two of you can sit on the sill, and the other two can have the chairs."

"I'm sorry there are no more chairs," said Caspar. "I feel shy about borrowing any downstairs, as my landlady has an unhappy conversational monomania about arrears of rent, and refuses to believe in my volume of poems. Look here, Charlie, you and Carpenter can camp out on the floor, and we will feed you. O'Rourke, if you will help me take the breakables out, we will capsize the wash-hand stand, and it will be unto you as a throne. I daresay some of you won't mind drinking beer out of teacups under the circumstances."

These various arrangements were carried out, and an interval of comparative silence

ensued, during which the lobster salad was consumed. Ada, kindly but rashly, said she had never had one she enjoyed so much, on which she was given some more. The sausage was then attacked, and the whole meal concluded with a wild debauch on bread-and-butter. Then O'Rourke arose, took up his parable, and said:

"My leedy and friends!"

"Oh Lor! He's going to make a speech," murmured Charlie with his mouth full.

"This joyous occasion should, in my opinion, be marked in some special manner; and it seems to me that the best way would be that we should drink with due solemnity——"

"Trust O'Rourke for finding an excuse for drinking something," said a voice from the floor.

"——Should drink with due solemnity the

health of our friend here who has lint his paleetial primmuses for our interteenment and divorsion. We have all known um for years in poverty and wealth—not much of the latter—and we can confidently assert we never hord um say a kind thing or do an onkind one to anybody. While exprissing contimpt and avorsion for mankind he has been tinder to women, kind to children, and a true and ginerous frind to his fellow-man. When he had money he spent it in helping his neebor by stilth, in givin' square meals to poor divils who sometimes wanted um, and, if ye'll allow me to add, Ada, in savin' poor girls from going wrong. All this I procleem (literally) from the housetop. I can't talk to-night—the thread of eloquence was spint in leader-writin' this afternoon. Long may he wave!"

Loud applause followed this effusion, as well as a copious imbibition of beer, after which a noisy version of "For he is a jolly

good fellow" was given, accompanied by loud squawking and the frequent and irrelevant statement of the price of sparragrass from the parrot, who was wildly excited.

"Speech, Caspar!" was next the general cry.

"Thanks, O'Rourke and friends, thanks. I can't make a speech just now. I drink your healths with great pleasure all the same."

"Why this tragic gloom, Rosenfeld?" asked Carpenter.

"A feast is incomplete without a death's head at it, I suppose."

It's that girl—that girl, sang a voice through Ada's brain.

This feast has gone away now where the others are. The remembrance of them is to us like music far away on a summer night. The clink of the knives—or perhaps fencing foils—beating time to the chorus on the glasses,

echoes in our ears sometimes when we sit in correct evening-dress (at rare intervals) at the rich man's table, and murmur to ourselves Hans Breitman's lament for his "barty." Those wonderful "scratch" banquets, where the guest contributed what he could forage, where there were not enough forks, those celebrations of the fraternity of impecuniosity where the joke was ready, the laughter free, and the appetite exorbitantly disproportionate to the supply, belong to the days that are never to be forgotten. Though there was no champagne, there was youth and laughter. And these together defied the world and the devil. The feasters are scattered, the old tavern has perhaps become a glittering restaurant, the tall old attic-laden street has perhaps been improved away. And we stray sadly round the ground trodden by those wandering feet long days ago and wonder where the revellers are whose ghosts surround us still.

Gone—gone to the colonies, to the marriage-market, to the devil, to the House of Commons, to the cemetery. They are great authors and painters, county magistrates, physicians, *prime donne*, statesmen, fiddlers and buffoons, and perpetual drunkards. But they all remember the days when they shared together in Soho, or Bloomsbury, or the Rue de l'École de Médecine, or Leipzig, or Vienna, the *pain bénit de la gaieté.* This may be tiresome, it may be mawkish sentiment, it may be a talked out subject—but, you who know—is it not true? You who have left your youth behind, and are prosperous, and ordered to mineral springs by your doctor, would you not give all your wealth to bring back one of those by-gone hours?

Time rakes away his dustheap of dead roses,
  Of empty cups, of broken vows,
Spent love, and all dim memory discloses
  The morning after youth's carouse;

He shows us shades of unforgotten faces,
  We hear the voices far away
Of revellers, who leave us still some traces
Of songs whose echoes haunt old halting places,
  Where night was often turned to day.

A knock came at the door, and the landlady's little girl brought Caspar a letter. "Ah," said he. "Sally!"

"Yes, Mr. Rosenfeld."

Caspar read the letter.

"Tell your mother to make out her bill. Take this round to "The Duke of York," and ask them for change. Bring some bottles of wine—claret." Exit Sally.

"Brethren and sister. Mr. Marsh accepts my poems, and begs to enclose a cheque, as he pleasantly and delicately puts it, 'to go on with.' I told him I wanted it, or I should cease to 'go on' at all."

After the wild howl of delight, which naturally arose at this announcement had partially subsided, Ada said to Caspar:

"I *am* glad, but—you will leave this street now, I suppose, won't you? I shall miss you and your pipe at the window in the evening."

"On the whole, Ada, no. There is no knowing how long this money may last. The people here are clean and moderately honest, principally from lack of temptation to be otherwise, and I am used to being here now—no. I shall not leave. Is that all right, Ada?"

"Yes. That's all right." And she leaned out of the window and whistled to the canary over the way.

"Now let us be joyful," said Miller. "Let us kick out the presiding death's head. Tell it it's only a common seven-and-sixpenny skull after all, and not even good enough for stage purposes."

The child Sally re-entered, saying: "Please sir, mother says here's the bill, and thank you,

sir, but 'The Duke of York' say they don't know nothing about no cheques, and they won't give anything on it, sir." ("Sally evidently looks on a cheque as a sort of pawn-ticket," remarked Miller aside to Ada.) "And please, sir, they won't give any wine on trust, and I was to take this up to you, Mr. Rosenfeld, which it came whiles I was out."

"This" was a telegram.

"Nice, hospitable, trusting sort of people at 'The Duke,' aren't they?" said Caspar opening the telegram envelope, "and all the banks are shut long ago."

He read the message, and stood for some time silent and motionless with it in his hand. Then he looked up, and none of them there had ever seen such a desolate and desperate face before. His eyes were wide open and vacant, as if they saw something far off, his mouth was rigidly shut, and his cheeks showed the outlines of the contracted muscles. His

colour did not change much, Then he seemed to remember himself, and handed the telegram to Charlie. It said:

"Carew, Sokebridge,

"To Rosenfeld, Little Skelton Street.

"*If you want to see D. again, come now; she will not live much longer. Rapid consumption, they say.*"

"Lily will be with her," said Charlie, "and has sent this probably on the sly."

"Will you excuse me, friends?" said Caspar. "I am afraid I shall have to leave you directly. Who has a time-table?"

O'Rourke had an "A.B.C."

"I can catch a train at—no—there will not be another to Sokebridge till to-morrow."

"Where from?" said O'Rourke.

"Victoria."

"Look at Waterloo."

"Good. I have it. 7.15. Quick train. Give me some money, somebody!"

Those present emptied their pockets of what they had. It was not much.

"It is enough," said Caspar. "You shall have it next time we meet. Good-bye, you people—you are all the friends I have left—and you are friends. Ada—I'm sorry I can't entertain you to-night—I'm not very amusing, I'm afraid—I'll come back and tell you why some day. Good-bye." He snatched up a hat and ran downstairs, and soon they saw him hurrying away in a hansom.

"What is it?" asked Ada in a whisper to Charlie.

"The girl he loves is dying. Read this."

Ada read the telegram and said, "May I keep this? He won't want it again?"

CHAPTER II.

"THIS HOUSE IS MINE!"

——For ever and ever farewell.
Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,
Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of man.

CASPAR was whirled along in the evening express, and strained his eyes to catch the first glimpse of the far-off sea, golden in the sunlight of the long May evening, as the train approached the little red-roofed, cliff-crowning town. He looked for it many miles before it could come in sight, but his impatience travelled faster than the train. He remembered well the afternoon in early October when he had last travelled on that line; when the

autumn mists made the distant woods loom mysteriously, when the green was overcast with a dust of rust and bronze, and the brilliant gold and umber billows of bracken spread over the ground among the tree roots, and scarlet and crimson flecks of creeper streaked and patched the heavy dark green ivy which climbed and clung on the gables and chimney-stacks of the villages. Thin perpendicular smoke-streaks hovered and had no energy to ascend through the windless atmosphere, and everywhere was the motionless dead silence of decay. That was a month after Dick's wedding. It was brighter now, and the sun shone through the narrow twig-intersected slits in the walls of dark fir trees and pale larches, past whose shelves and gables and thin rigid stems the train rushed from time to time. Caspar had never been so anxious to hurry through such a scene before.

At last he did see the pale glittering far-

spread sea, under long sloping streaks of soft gray and golden clouds which stretched and dwindled away into points, and frayed out into overhanging fringes tinged with semi-transparent brown, on a back-sky of the palest blue that ever was seen in heaven.

Small moth-like trawling boats hovered apparently an inch or so above the luminous sea surface. Suddenly the train rounded a curve, and the red roofs of Sokebridge, on the top of its cliff, and the great green downs behind and inland became visible. Caspar could see far and away on the wooded rising ground beyond the town the dark perpendicular mass of the Manor House, with its crumbling old brick chimney stacks waiting to be lit up by the growing glow, that came over them every evening.

When the fringe was red on the westlan' hill.

The engine whistled, the train slackened,

and Caspar's heart beat horribly. He was out of the train before it stopped, and, casting a rapid glance up and down the platform, left at a swinging stride for his destination. He had to walk through the one main street of the town, where such of the inhabitants as had no better occupation were standing talking together, before shop windows and in doorways, about each other and about the "state of the foreshore." The Sokebridge mind was always in a condition of tumult regarding the "state of the foreshore," though it did not explain where and what the "back" or "aft" shore was. Caspar remembered afterwards that he had heard and noticed all this conversation with a certain dull curiosity. He remarked the photographs, in a window, of Mr. Gladstone between a popular murderer and Miss Maud Branscombe. And then he got free of the town, and walked away past the semi-detached colony, past the new cement-

faced Wesleyan Chapel into the downland, as the evening was coming on, and the sky getting deeper in colour. As he walked up the avenue, with its carpet of unswept leaves, he shivered in his great-coat. There was round him the smell of evening and of spring. There was no light visible on the front side of the house. There was no wind, and only the far-off sound of the sea broke the deadly silence. When he reached the house, he found the door open, and Lily Carew standing in the doorway, hatless, and holding a fur tippet round her neck.

"Oh, I am so glad! I thought you were never coming." And she laughed in a weak kind of way, and drew him into the hall.

"I came by the first train I could catch. How is she?"

"Oh, I don't know! She says she is much the same, and a little better, perhaps. The doctor says it is difficult to say how long

she may last. You see he doesn't know that she has nothing to last for, and that everything has acted together to kill her. I'm in an awfully funny state, what with sitting up, and getting meals anyhow, one thing and another, my fingers tremble, and I don't know whether to laugh or cry." This in a pitiful little voice that certainly had not made up its mind, and allowed itself finally to settle down into silence, while the owner wiped her eyes surreptitiously, and Caspar took off his coat.

"By the way," said he, "did anyone authorise you to send that telegram?"

"No; I did it of my own accord. I told nobody. If any of the servants see you, I shall say it's a doctor from London."

"Does *she* know?"

"She does now. I took care not to consult her till after I had sent it."

"Well done, Lily! If you do all this for

your friends, what will you do for the man you will one day love?"

"Lead him an awful life, I daresay. But don't chaff now."

"I'm not. You deserve to be loved by a good and happy man, and I think you have got your deserts. Why are you the only person here?"

"Because I am the only person she cares to have with her, and because *he* is away in London or somewhere, I suppose with that woman. Mr. Rosenfeld, if I were a man, I would shoot George Farringdon."

"Brave little nineteenth-century Beatrice! But tell me, as you seem to know, who is the woman for whose sake Farringdon is miles away from a sick wife, who never did him wrong, and apparently ignorant that she is ill?"

"Oh, don't you know? I thought everybody knew. It is that Mrs. Brandon that used to be here."

"God of Heaven! child—you are not certain of that? It is only some gossip you have heard? Try back in your recollection, whether you have any certain knowledge."

"I know it. I know people who could tell you all about it—some of those fellows he knows in London. They will tell you. But there is no doubt about it. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing particular. I was only thinking how like we all are to those forefathers of mine in a dry land, who saw a river before them after a three days' thirst, and they could not drink of it, for it was bitter. And our life is the river we must drink from, whether it be bitter or not, and there is no tree now to take away the bitterness. Take me to where Dick is, will you?"

"Come this way, then. She is in her own sitting-room, on the sofa."

This was a small room on the ground floor,

which looked westward, and, from her position by the still red coal fire, Dick could see the distant darkening woods, and the golden sky behind them, with a little glimpse of sea far round to the left and southward. The room was full of her favourite books, and contained a selected few of the strange and antique pieces of furniture and porcelain collected by the late Claudius Farringdon. George had given her perfect freedom as to such things, having lost even the pretence of an interest in them himself. Lily opened the door and left them, saying:

"Don't be long. The clergyman comes in an hour," in a low voice.

Caspar looked once at Dick's face and hands. They alone were the pale witnesses of her state, her body being covered with a long furred jacket spread over her by Lily.

Then he went to her side, and knelt there, and taking both her wan little blue-veined

hands in his, and looking up into her face, said—for a long time it seemed, nothing. Then she smiled a faint glad smile, because she saw him there, and said:

"I suppose this is very wrong, isn't it?" with a kind of attempt to take her hands away.

"What do I care, now? I have loved you ever since I saw you, and you have begun to love me, haven't you?" He held her hands still.

"Yes," she said, gently, "I love you, Caspar. It was stupid of me not to find it out sooner, wasn't it?"

"But now I know it, and you know it, and well or ill it shall be known to both of us for ever—if there is any for ever. You will try and get well?"

"I am getting better. I feel better now than I have for some time before. I think it is because you are here."

Caspar lifted his head and looked round. The sky above outside was one glowing mass of rosy flecks now, and it almost brought back the complexion which had once been such a component of Dick's delicate beauty.

Then Dick disengaged one hand and looked through it at the evening glow. "Not much flesh there, is there, for Shylock?"

Caspar only replied by taking the hand back again and kissing it. Then Dick lay still, watching the sky, and they were both silent. She shivered a little, and the roseate clouds had time to wane and grow first brown and then purple, while one or two tiny stars grew out of the deepening blue before they spoke again. Dick pointed them out.

"I wonder if people live in them? Whether I am going to one, and whether they will let you come too?"

"Where we would have a home of our own, managed our own way, on the strictly

exclusive system, with plenty of books and flowers, and trespassers always prosecuted?"

"I think we would have a castle to live in, one that looked red in the evening and morning with the sunlight, where we could stand on the balconies, and look far away down the river-valley, and over the plain, and see the villages begin to light their lamps in the evening, when the bats come out, and the fireflies among the ivy leaves and in the woods below, and the mists would come, and one would hear a long way off below—all the way from the earth to our star—some music and singing. They would sing—I don't know—I think they are doing it now, only the songs seem mixed together, and yet not out of tune: some are the old Scotch tunes; then are those songs they sung when the students came floating down the river at Schlangenberg with their coloured lanterns—I can almost hear the words. Oh, what nonsense I'm talking! I

believe I was getting sleepy. I do get sleepy often, but I don't sleep properly."

Caspar kept his eyes always fixed on her face, marking each change. Then she began to talk rather disconnectedly:

"You know George is losing money terribly? They say he will have to sell this place. I like the place now, though I was once afraid of it. What colour do you call that, over the sea, far off? Is it green or yellow?"

"Something of both, I think."

"Mr. Merewether is coming soon. You mustn't let him find you. You must forget all about me, you know, if I get well—and I am getting well. Do you want to say anything particular before you go?"

"I will go directly. I have nothing to say. I have made a horrible mistake. I have loved you and longed for you all my life—at least I think it must be all my

life, it was long enough—and now—— I was talking to your poor little nurse about the waters they called Marah; never mind. You make up your mind to get well. I can't talk to-day, I can only drivel; I'd better go."

"Yes. Good-bye! Oh, Caspar, I am not so sure I shall get well. Do you think, if I don't, I shall see you again—ever—anywhere? I shall believe what you believe, you know."

"Darling, if all our love is wasted, if all our sorrow and sacrifice to honour is fruitless, and there is no help for it anywhere, for ever, then indeed have we drunk and drenched ourselves, and drowned in those bitter waters, and the devils may laugh at us for ever!"

"Caspar!"

"My darling."

"You—had better—kiss me—once. For good-bye—you know."

Caspar took her in his arms, and gently put her hands round his neck, where they clung; and the whole room swam round with him, and the tears blinded his eyes as he kissed Dick on the mouth for the first time.

At last he stood up, trembling. The fire had burned low, and more stars were shining, and the hills and quivering woods were dim and dark: and Dick's hand sought his, and gently drew him down. She spoke no word, and he kissed her again for the last time. He could not have said how long it lasted; but she had been dead some seconds when he gently released her and laid her back on the couch. He almost reeled from the room, seized his hat, and went out into the avenue. There he found himself in that strange afterlight which remains when the sun is long ago gone and the little tongues of rosy smoke and golden flame faded away into filmy streaks of brown

and lead-colour, making the near trees darker than ever, and the distant ones misty and vaguely visible. Just such a light had first shown him Dick's face, one far-off summer evening, on the bank of a German river.

There appeared in this latter gloaming a quite other vision. A small, grizzly, dim apparition in a long coat and a tall hat approached, saying:

"Mr. Farringdon? No?"

Caspar absently replied: "No; he is away. Are you the clergyman?"

"No. I am come on business."

It was an old man with a beard. Caspar started. Something familiar and yet horrible there was in this obscure little bent figure in the shadow of the tall trees. He seemed like some malevolent earth-gnome, who only emerged on such a weird night as this on upper earth, perhaps only on such awful occasions and in such mystic scenes as can only

be produced as was this one—by trees and summer starlight. Then Caspar recollected himself a little, and said in a short stern voice:

"You cannot go in now."

"Sorry, but I must. I am only an agent. My orders are very strict." Caspar plunged forward, exclaiming, "You here!" and made a wild grasp at the beard of the venerable writ-bearer, who escaped him, and disappeared in the darkness. Caspar looked up and saw the stars whirl in fantastic dances round the deep clear blue, heard the crash of swords, and the thundering trample of horse-hoofs develop from the distant hollow murmur of the sea growing louder, and reeling against a tree, dropped in an unconscious, helpless-looking heap among its roots. His nervous system could no longer sustain the strong emotional strain which had been cumulatively imposed on it, and he fainted.

Mr. Merewether, with the sacrament, arrived too late to administer it, and found Lily crying convulsively, with her face on a dead girl's breast, in one room, while in the hall there sat a small old man in a long great-coat, with a black American cloth bag at his feet. When asked to go, he declined. When the clergyman so far forgot his office as to threaten to kick him out, he replied: "This house is mine. I don't wish to disturb anyone, but this house is mine."

"Do you know that there is one dead in this house?"

"Yes. That makes this house mine."

"Who and what are you?"

"Nathan Rosenfeld. This house is mine. I request you, civilly, to leave it. Perhaps Jessie will be satisfied now," he muttered. The servants, in the meantime, were placidly beginning a hot supper.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BRANDON'S VISITORS.

"MRS. BRANDON in?"

"I'll see, sir. Will you step inside, please?"

"Thanks. Tell Mrs. Brandon I want to see her. Here's my card."

"I don't know whether you can see her now, sir."

"Give her my card. Mr. Rosenfeld, say, wants her."

Mrs. Brandon was lying on the sofa, on a red and white Algerine carpet-rug, with a novel in her hand and a glass of brandy

and soda on a little table. To support her in her exertions, and to enable her to endure her troubles and anxieties, she had found doses of brandy and soda between meals, an excellent specific.

She had but recently breakfasted, and looked a little untidy and dishevelled, having omitted to brush her hair or adorn herself with a collar or cuffs, but in spite of these facts, even in that cruellest of times, the morning, she remained a young and beautiful woman to all intents and purposes. Yet hers was not the kind of beauty which lasts, plus a little stoutness, till five and forty. It depended largely on shape and colour of face and body, and on preservation of due proportion between the various dimensions.

To have grown fat, as is the unhappy destiny of too many a pretty Jewish woman, would have been fatal to her. That tall and slender body, those rather square

shoulders and perfect hands and feet, looked as though they never could change. And the dead-black rippling hair crowning the straight thin black brows, gave no promise of turning grey, and the uniform clear tawny pallor of the firm flesh, showed not any "map of days outworn."

And yet she knew that her beauty, which was her power and her curse, could not last much longer. Also that her gently aquiline nose and firm chin would co-operate to make a crone's profile one day before long; when she would be nothing and have nothing, unless she took to some one of the many unsavoury trades that indigence forces on old wasted women; a destiny no art could long foreslow. She was now dependent on her father —who only regarded outlay on her as bread cast on the waters—and to some extent on George, who, however, had only been unconsciously wasting on Peter the money he owed

to Paul. When she ceased to be useful as a decoy to the venerable recluse of Castle Street, who could deny the probability of his dropping her with rather less hesitation than that with which he would give away a bad shilling in ostentatious charity?

And then? "And then more brandy and soda, my child; more brandy and less soda. And then gin. It is cheaper and nastier, but I believe old women learn to adore it." And the black cat blinked assentingly at the blazing fire, and waited for further information from her companion and fellow-creature.

"It is a picturesque prospect, Kitty, isn't it? Perhaps the housetops of Whitechapel will suit you better than its interiors will me. You have equality, for you have no dresses to buy. You have quite human fraternity, for I hear you swear and see you scratch at one another here as much as you once did there. I think I can be a little younger yet, though,

by an artistic touch or two." And she proceeded to let down her long hair before the chimney-glass, and to plait it into a single tail, with a piece of dull red ribbon at the end.

"It makes all the difference between a girl and a woman, Kitty. It looks innocent and playful, too. So do you."

A knock came at the door, and the maid entered, saying:

"A party wishes to see you, mum."

"What sort of a party?"

"Gentleman."

"Old or young?"

"I should say he was young, mum; but he don't look it exactly. I never seen him before."

"What does he want?"

"He wants to see you, mum."

"Tell him I'm only just up, and he can send a message or call later."

"I did, mum. He said: 'Tell her I want to see her.'"

"My goodness, he's got cheek. Did he give a name?"

"Yes'm. Mr. Rosenfeld, he told me to tell you. Mr. Caspar Rosenfeld," repeated she, reading a card.

"Why on earth couldn't you say that before? Show him in."

Caspar came into the room, very pale, his eyes flashing out of black caverns, his mouth set in grim style in which satire and savagery lurked together. Jessica rose to meet him, saying:

"Caspar, this is an unexpected pleasure!"

"Very likely."

"I haven't seen you for—— Oh, I don't know how long—not to speak to you. I have seen you once or twice when you didn't see me, though. Won't you sit down?"

Caspar remained standing. Through long

habit, he automatically took up his position in front of the fire. Jessica re-assumed her previous position on the red and white lounge. He said :

"Don't talk so much, and listen. I have several things to say to you, and I have not much time."

"Talk away. I have plenty of time. Sit down, do. You look so very much—too much—like something between the statue of the Commendatore and Mephistopheles, when you stand there. I expect to see you go through a trap, with red fire."

"No wonder you would rather I sat down. Now I am going to tell you a short story. Once on a time, in the darkest of ages, there lived an old man who had never been young. And the old man prayed in the darkness to his idol that he might live long and prosper well. And the answer came to him in a vision, where he saw steps leading up to a great

palace of glittering twenty-four carat gold. And he saw himself, a small, grey, hateful, unclean, claw-handed kobold, walking up the steps. Each step, on close inspection, proved to be a human being in a horizontal position. So he walked on, treading sometimes on a head, and sometimes on a heart. And the voice of his god, some old Sidonian devil-god, never driven away or exorcised yet, any more than Ashtoroth has been, was all round him, and over and under, like muffled bells, saying: 'You shall live and you shall prosper; you shall reach the golden paradise. But you shall make a sacrifice to me for this. You shall give me the body of your daughter and the heart of your son to make the first and the last steps.' The old man accepted cheerfully, and tramped along. At last he came to the splendid temple where he was to dwell with his god for ever, and he stepped in. Looking behind him, he saw the steps fall away, out of

reach, out of sight, into the darkness he and they sprang from. And he found that the brilliancy of the gold temple was not due to reflection of external light, but to the fact that it was white-hot. The voice of the god was again heard echoing through the empty aisles, saying, this time in a humorous tone: 'You have what you asked for; I hope you like it.' And the miserable old man was soon a miserable heap of gray ashes. And the priestesses came with dustpans and brushes, and removed him, and threw the dust of him over the earth glowing far down in the darkness."

"Is that the end?"

"There is a sequel, but it is less allegorical. The daughter was sacrificed to the hungry-eyed Syrian goddess, and the happy childish days she once knew were turned to bitterness and vileness, and sorrow and anger. And part of her fate was to help to spoil the life

of her brother, and take from him the one thing that made it for a little while worth living. And now neither of them know what to do or where to turn, to fly from the endless weariness, which is the worst of all. And it is all they have to look for."

"Look here! drop all allegory, and tell me what you mean exactly."

"Why need you try to help to kill the poor, pretty, little girl who never hurt you in her life? Why need you select her and me of all people if you wanted victims? Do you know what you have done? You have made it difficult for me to find bread to eat: that is nothing, though I have always felt nothing but love and sorrow for you. You have made her life shorter, by making yourself the cause of half the misery of her unhappy marriage. You have taken away the last trace of a chance of a happy life for her, by gradually changing her husband from an ordinary young man into

a Circean swine. I suppose it is rather waste of time to ask why you have done all this? What good do you imagine you have done to yourself? I can't suppose you would consider anyone else much."

"Did anyone ever consider me? Why should I care for anyone? Are the people I have any chance of seeing or speaking to so particularly attractive? Can you point out a single acquaintance I ever had who was worth taking any trouble about—except to get something out of?"

"Jessie—you are my sister. You have led the life that has been made for you, you have done all that a foolish, passionate woman, a child first bullied and then spoilt could be expected to do. But you are my sister. Your lines have been hard, I know—like mine, like mine. But why let your worst vengeance fall on the wrong people? I loved you always, and looked for you all over the world for

months, till I thought I had lost you for ever. I find you here—now. Can I be very agreeable, and very calm, when you have ruined and made desolate the home of the one human being who ever found me worth loving. And why? I don't know. Do you?"

"Have you seen her lately then?"

"I saw her yesterday."

"In her husband's absence, eh?"

"You know he was from home. Of course, I suppose you were amusing him here. How do you do it? Is it his mental or physical charms which attract you? Did you have a jolly evening? Did you play nap and drink champagne? Is that why you are taking brandy and soda now? When you see him again you can communicate the intelligence to him that Dick died last night."

"Died! I didn't know it was as bad as that, Caspar, really."

"Yes. The announcement will come very

well from your mouth. You can go and advise him as to the selection of a becoming pattern for mourning suits."

"Don't, Caspar!"

"Why do you cry? What is the use of repenting? Never repent. It is weak and unbecoming. It spoils the perfection of vengeance. It will never make you better, only more uncomfortable. Go and console George Farringdon for his widowhood, and when you want a lasting memorial of your successful ambition, go and look for it in Sokebridge churchyard. Jessie, my only sister, I wish you good-morning." Caspar went out into the mist of the London morning. The world within him seemed darker than the world outside, but lightning—streaked with maddest thoughts.

In the course of the day Jessica received a visit from George Farringdon. He had heard of his wife's death.

"I am just going down by train, you know. But I wanted to see you a moment before I went. She was an awfully dear little woman."

"So you seemed to find."

"And I don't know what I'll do without her. And, Jessie, there is a man in possession in my house. What on earth I am to do I don't know. Do you?"

"Pay him."

"I can't. He is a beastly old Jew called Rosenfeld. Wonder if he's any relation to a man I know of that name? Jessie, I meant to have asked you to be my wife."

"Did you? You are very kind." (Drily.)

"Hullo?——I say, what is the matter with you?"

"I am pretty well, thanks. Poor old boy," she added caressingly, "did he want comforting in his misfortunes, eh?" and she stroked his head tenderly. George seized her

hand and waist. "Jessie!" he exclaimed hoarsely, "I've been an awful fool all my life——"

"Don't say that—George," (tenderly.)

"But I've had some awful warnings. I believe you are about the only human being in the world that cares for me——"

"Do you, George?" (very tenderly—and not releasing herself from his arms.) "Well?"

"I've no wife, no home, no money, and no friends—the chaps I know, and even lent fivers to sometimes—they cut me now."

"You used to say it was good form to know the right people, didn't you?"

"Well, I suppose I'm not the right people now. I'm beginning to learn human nature a little. I mean to begin again, straighter. Jessie, I—I like you more than anyone I ever saw, I believe. Will you help me to fight the world? Damn the world! I'm not good at fighting it. Will you take me for a

husband? You know me pretty well by this time."

"I think I do," she replied, looking up softly into his face. "Listen, George. Do you remember writing a letter once to your father, just before your marriage, in which you said——"

"Oh, I say! I didn't mean all that you know—at least——"

"At least you didn't know I should read it. And do you remember the time when you and your father thought and talked of me as you might of a horse you wanted to sell, or a slave you had bought, and were a little ashamed of? Supposing I were to forgive you all that—all the wreck of my life he made—all the contempt you expressed——"

"Oh, if you would! It's all so long ago, and we are so different now—at least I am, and I suppose he is."

"Exactly, and I am much the same."

"Will you forgive me, Jessie?" George clasped her still tightly in his arms, and breathed hard—breathed brandy.

"No!" exclaimed she, suddenly extricating herself, and standing before him, flashing lightnings of defiance. "We do not forgive. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth for us. The 'beastly old Jew, called Rosenfeld,' is my father, who sold me to yours. Caspar Rosenfeld, his son, your friend and adviser, and your wife's lover, is my brother. You have paid us our vengeance. Go and weep now on your 'dear little woman's' grave!"

George went out. On the threshold he met Dr. Van Westerdijk.

"Are you in this plot too?" asked George, in a quiet, savage voice.

"I to not onderstant. You seem distressed. It is natural. You 'ave lost a wäife, a sharming wäife whom you falued so moch. I go to win one. Mrs. Brandon is vot you

call engaged to me," remarked the little doctor smilingly.

"Congratulate you both." And George walked forth into outer darkness.

At this date Dr. Van Westerdijk and his very fascinating wife are occupying themselves in various continental towns in relieving of their superfluous cash, by various safe and ingenious methods, young and foolish English gentlemen who stray across their path, and are much looked up to and sought after in the circles they adorn. They are known as the Baron and Baroness Van Westerdijk. Their existence is like that of the swallows—migratory. And they usually leave no trace behind them, except a bitter memory in the minds of many creditors. The Baron will no doubt make a fortune, retire, and take to honesty at the eleventh hour, not from any sentimental attachment to that state or quality, but because he will then find it, as he does its opposite at present, the best policy.

CHAPTER IV.

"HE'S NOT SAFE!"

> Und die bist todt, mein todtes Kindchen . . .
> . . . Klaglieder die Nachtigallen sangen
> Die Sterne sind mit zur Leiche gegangen.

THE town, or village, of Sokebridge stands, as has been said, over the sea, on a cliff. Not a stern and majestic stone cliff, *aere perennius*, but a brown, land-slipping, outline-changing, mutable, and muddy cliff. Inland, behind the town, rises a green wooded dawn, gashed by quarrymen into great grey wounds here and there. Near the foot of this down a spur projects seaward—an abrupt and blunt promontory, ending in a red earthy precipice some fifty

feet above the nearest buildings; and on this promontory is a level plateau large enough to carry groups of sombre fir-trees, surrounding the churchyard and old parish church of Sokebridge, whose square grey tower rises from amid the dark tree-tops.

You cannot see much of the churchyard until you have climbed the combination of zigzag path and paved stone stairs once scaled by the weekly worshippers. When you get there, you find an ancient Norman church, rich with ivy and lichen outside; bare, damp, and unadorned, save by its own antiquity, inside. Old helmets hang on its whitewashed walls, and old flags are heaped in corners. The ladders leading to the leaden platform of the tower are rotten, and rungs are missing. The windows are of plain transparent glass, which gives the interior the damp pallor of a dead church. The high old pews are worm-eaten, and

some have fallen together helplessly. The organ is dumb. No one worships here now. A few old residents have the right of burial, but public worship is carried on in the new church on the cliff below, with all modern accessories and comforts. The only sacred words the old church has re-echoed to for years back are these: "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay." Tourists come and stare at it. Young shop-girls with their lovers occasionally visit it on Sunday afternoons, but the fir-trees give them an eerie chill, and they go down again. And the church stands there alone.

Old inhabitants remember weddings to have been held in it, and "prayers for those at sea." Legends tell how in

The dark backward and abyss of time

attempts had been made to build the church on the lower level, where it would have been obviously more convenient, and how the stones were miraculously translated nightly to the higher, until the builders gave in, saying it was the saints or the devil that decreed the change. Posterity are under obligations to whichever power it was which placed the old pile in its present admirable position—as an object of contemplation. It dominates the town, and overpeers from its solemn and dignified solitude among the trees the upstart villas and cottages of yesterday, and remains the grey incarnation of many centuries, in which men have been baptized, married, and buried, cycle after cycle, ever since Christian men have been dwelling under it. And the fir-wood is fitted to surround it. There is a sad, bleak, and solemn beauty about these fir-trees, which makes them a fit setting for the ancient and deserted

church. And in this churchyard, one still summer day, Dick Farringdon was buried. And in the silent summer night that followed, Caspar Rosenfeld walked through that fir-wood, in the deep darkness, under black branches that allowed some stray starshine to pass at rare intervals, until he came to the low stone churchyard wall, over which he climbed, and made for the new-made mound of clay which covered all that was left of his lost love. And he was alone with her, and the stars above them both. And he knelt down and kissed that clay mound, and muttered through it to the dead ears below: "My dead darling, the fight was too long for you, and you have left me to fight alone. And I shall be alone always now: I wish I were with you, there, in the warm earth, out of the way of all men for all time, for I shall never see your dear true eyes again, or live the life I

might have lived, with you to make it beautiful; I could have lived for you, and worked for you, and died for you; and you—you have died instead. You have chosen well. I am tired, I want to rest with you, I am weary of the sky and sea. Good night, my darling!" And he stayed there motionless and silent. And what he thought, lying on that damp clay heap, no man shall dare to say. At last he rose and strode down the steps and zig-zag path, with a strange, wild light in his eyes, as they looked out of his tangled black hair; he had forgotten his hat, and left it above near the grave. And on the steps he met an upturned face, that the starlight revealed to be George Farringdon. "Ah! I have been looking for you," observed Caspar.

"What for?"

"To kill you. And I couldn't do it better than here and now."

Farringdon laughed uneasily and replied:

"Risky thing to do, eh, in this nineteenth century. Coroner, you know, jury, Marwood, and all that."

"Man! Don't prattle to me about danger. Do you think I, here, at this moment, would not welcome the worst death man could die by? Look here, you killed her! The death of my dead love up there," he shouted, pointing with one arm, and shaking Farringdon like a rag with the other, "is on your soul to all eternity, and you dare pour out your half-drunk drivel about Marwood to me, who will throw you down that steep there whether I go with you or not!"

"You are mad!" said the other, still more uncomfortable.

"Mad? Of course. What of that? What is the use of arguing then with a madman?"

"I say, I won't stand this! I'll have you arrested! I'll have you hung! I'll have you black-balled! I'll—— Oh Rosenfeld, I'm talking rot. I wish to H—ll you would kill me, or that I had the courage to do it myself. I thought myself superior to her, and it maddened and degraded me to find I was inferior. You don't know how fond of her I was!"

He nearly said "How I loved her," but his customary shyness of using expressions he considered peculiar to romances and plays, prevented his words breaking their pitiful bonds of convention. Even at this supreme moment oscillating on the verge of probable annihilation, he was afraid of seeming ridiculous to his antagonist by the use of a romantic phrase, as he considered the best word in any language to be. Caspar relaxed his hold. "I shall miss her now, awfully," added Farringdon.

"Will you? Poor devil! I suppose you did once love her as much as animals like you can love anything. George Farringdon, shake hands."

Farringdon held out a cold perspiring hand. One may perspire, when in the power of an apparent lunatic on the edge of a precipice, especially if one has been indulging in hot whisky and water, which under certain circumstances, becomes a sudorific.

"Now go, and never let me see your face again."

And Caspar went down the steps once for all.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Farringdon. "He's not safe!"

And this man went and deposited an expensive and dexterously woven wreath of white camellias on his wife's grave, and returned, of course not forgetting his hat.

When Caspar passed through the bar of

his hotel, they were just closing. He was muttering to himself some line, and the flippant barmaid, who admired him, said :

"Did you speak, sir ?"

Caspar looked up.

"I ? Yes, my dear. I said this life would be a Dance of Fools, were it not a Dance of Death."

"Whatever do you mean, sir ?"

"I don't know. I beg your pardon."

"He's had as much as he can carry, I think," said a facetious bagman, who admired the bagmaid.

Caspar overheard the remark and said :

"More, my friend, more ! Good-night."

CHAPTER V.

SCHLANGENBERG.

For a year or two after taking his degree and license to kill and cure, Charlie Deane resided at home to study, keep his relatives company, and wait for an available practice to come into the market. He and Lily railed on each other as usual, but with intervals of more serious conversation at times, showing that each was older and had seen more of the strange and solemn realities of life and death, than in the now distant days when they used to dress up and murder Hamlet. Mrs. Deane was very old now, but gave every indication of becoming a good deal older before they lost the kindness

of her old grey eyes, and the majesty of her white hair for ever. Miss Deane was energetic as usual.

And one summer afternoon, in a secluded part of the garden this conversation took place.

"Lily," said Charlie.

"Well!"

"I haven't heard from Caspar for a year. I suppose he is circumambulating the terraqueous globe by himself."

"Poor fellow!"

"What an awful mess he has made of his life!"

"Perhaps he will get all right again, by-and-by."

"If you mean by all right the same as we first knew him, he never will. I have not known him these years for nothing. He will work, no doubt, and perhaps do better work than ever. He will joke and laugh too,

perhaps. Men do, I believe, sometimes—that sort of men—when all the joy has been rent out of their life for always; a kind of lightening before death. And I think he will be kinder than ever to some, and fiercer than ever to others. But nothing will make him forget."

"Charlie, shall we go and see Dick's grave again?"

"Right. We will. Come along." And they walked to the old churchyard on the hill. Lily was silent and subdued. There were no tears in her eyes when she stood by that grave, only a kind of ferocity. At last she said: "I should think they had angels enough, without wanting her."

"Angels? Bosh. She joined them of her own accord if anyone ever did."

Long pause.

"Lily."

"Yes!"

"Come here. Come closer. Let me look at you." And his eyes asked a question as they looked down into his. And hers appeared to answer his in the affirmative, for as they left the churchyard, Lily said :

"But what on earth will they say at home ?"

"Oh, we have both had our own way with them too long to think of giving it up now."

By the time they got to the front door they were indulging in conversational sparring as usual.

"I can't think," said Miss Deane, "how it is you two never manage to be in proper time for tea."

Later in that summer they two deserted the homely tea-table altogether, and the breakfast and dinner table as well ; and might have been seen one day breakfasting, chattering, looking at fir-crowned crags and ruined *Burgs,* and making derisive remarks on their fellow-

creatures on board the Rhine steamer *Kaiser Wilhelm.* Charlie explained things, inventing where authentic information gave way, and smoked German cigars lazily and continuously, with a soft felt hat pulled over his eyes in the direction in which the sun blazed in under the deck-awning. Lily stood up excited and delighted, with a small opera-glass, and called attention to the various phenomena on the banks.

The next day they travelled in a train. Charlie had taken their tickets and kept the destination a secret. All Lily saw was a series of stations, each provided with a Herr *Bahnhofs-Inspektor* in a scarlet flat cap, who stood on the platform apparently to greet the train and dismiss it with a pastoral benediction; a benevolent old guard, who looked hot and cindery as to the forehead, and wore his coat unbuttoned and his cap on the back of his head, and came and made kind but un-

intelligible remarks to them suddenly through the window, while the train was in mid-career.

"I feel rather like Alice in the train in the Looking-glass country," said Lily, "but I suppose you and he know where the train is going."

"I think they've lost the way. He came to ask me if I remembered it."

"I regret with tears, how in earlier years I wholly neglected my geography. I have no idea of distance and direction. I shouldn't be the least surprised this afternoon to find myself in Berlin, or Vienna, or Paris, or Rotterdam. Rotterdam is on the Rhine somewhere, isn't it?"

"More or less."

"What is that stuff growing in the fields, with large shiny leaves?"

"That is the stuff they make German cigars of. Some call it tobacco, but opinions differ."

"We are getting into mountains again, and woods—look!"

"Yes; so we are." Charlie looked at his watch. "We shall stop soon." They did stop soon, in a station which was not very unlike other stations, except that it was pale red. "We get out here," said Charlie.

As they got on to the platform and walked about, waiting for the disentanglement of their modest luggage, Lily exclaimed: "Look, Charlie! Aren't those students?"

Four or five stalwart young men, with plump, square, scarred faces, and small green caps, were walking up and down the platform, with a certain lordly air of owning the neighbourhood generally.

"Yes; they are some of the *Guestfalia.* You will see plenty more. There is a university here. Ah! there are our things." And Charlie sought a porter, whom he shortly started off with a truck. "That's all right.

Now we will walk." And they walked across the dusty and dazzling Bahnhofs Platz into a tall, narrow, and shady street, gay with coloured awnings over shop windows, painted outer shutters, and warm-coloured, fantastic roofs. After about five minutes' walk, they came to a large open square, with an antique and highly-decorative metal pump in it.

"Now look up," said Charlie, as he got dexterously out of the way of two scarlet-capped youths who appeared to be too short-sighted to observe that anybody else was in the path of their proud promenade, who nevertheless favoured the pair with a calm, superior, and pensive stare. Above the town was a dark green mountain, now visible through the break in the streets' continuity. On the side side of it stood the tall façade of a magnificent ruin, round which the hot, sun-lit air quivered. "Do you know where you are now?"

"It is beautiful. Know where we are?

My dear boy, I knew from the moment we started this morning, but I thought you expected me to remain plunged in mystery and wonder."

"Ah, well, it wasn't such a difficult thing to guess. This is the Ross-Platz; that is the Grand Ducal and Imperial Town Pump; there is our hotel, the old Kron-Prinz; and yonder is our *Dienstmann* unloading. I"l go and pay him."

"Couldn't we go up there this afternoon?"

"It would be boiling hot, and full of Baedeker. We'll go at sunset. In the mean time we will have some grub somewhere, and rest."

"I suppose they will give us food in the hotel?"

"Of course they will, if you like. But I know a trick worth two of that. You just wait."

Then Charlie secured rooms and paid the

Dienstmann. "Now look here, let's get into this carriage. Jump in; I'll tell him where to go," observed Charlie, lighting his tenth ten-pfennig cigar. They drove across a bridge over a brown river, which gave Lily a sudden and delighting first impression of the green Schlangenthal, curving away into purple space, and the yellow village and steeple-dotted plain into which it opened. The cab stayed and was dismissed at the entrance of a shady garden over whose entrance, on a white curving board, was the title, in Gothic capitals: *Garten-Wirthschaft.* There were only a few elderly women and children there.

"Let us take this table," said Charlie, "and we can see the view. So. There now, Fräulein, kindly give us some calf-cutlets and a couple of *viertels* of red wine, and we will bless you. Now, Lily, you can see it all. There is the town, and here are we. You can take it all in without my doing guide-book."

After a long pause, Lily said, "I think it is the most beautiful place I ever saw."

"So people say who have seen more places than either of us."

"Look, there are three students just coming in. What sort are they? Oh, look, I didn't see that before; there is a coloured shield on the tree they are sitting down under."

"That is their table, and the shield bears their colours. They belong to a club, you know. This is the garden where they take their *Frühschoppen* — that's beer before lunch, with a band playing, on Sunday mornings."

"But that must be awfully unwholesome."

"It's awfully nice, and I don't care who gainsays it. Did you ever hesitate between what was nice and what was wholesome? Did anybody ever, when they had youth, strength, and spirits?"

"Look at them drinking the beer. Are they always ceremonious like that?"

"Rather. They may be livelier and noisier, but they always treat beer-drinking with due respect, as the most serious thing as well as the highest privilege in life."

They were close to the table where the valiant youths in dark blue muffin caps and tricoloured breast bands were seated, one of whom Charlie overheard remarking: "Lauter Engländer."

"Ja. Die ist doch'n hubsches Mädel, so hübsch habi noch nit hier gesehe."

"Du wirst 'ner verliebter Fuchs, Flick. Bist mir auch bier schuldig."

"Kommt dir mein Restnach!"

"Pros't, Flick. Das Mädel ist wirklich colossal."

"Do you understand what they are talking about?" said Lily, observing that the three students were eyeing them furtively.

"They are making complimentary remarks about you."

"I only caught a few words. Was it me they were saying was colossal?"

"It was."

"I don't call that complimentary. And the German girls I've seen are not so very small."

"Colossal, in the mouth of a German student is complimentary to whatever noun-substantive he applies it to. I just know that much. You are the noun-substantive. Now I will tell you a story. Some years ago two travellers might have been seen seated one summer evening at this very table, if it hadn't been nearly too dark under the trees to see anything. The younger and shorter of the two had finely chiselled features, and a form which might have been the model of the original Antinous, plus a glass of Schlangenberger beer and an eye-glass. His name was Charles

Deane, and he was a wandering medical student."

"He is wandering a little now, I think."

"Don't interrupt. The elder and taller was sallow, sun-tanned by many a clime, and plenteously swart-haired. He was called Caspar Rosenfeld, and his profession a little mixed. Just then it consisted of being philosophic guide to anyone's erring footsteps but his own. And along that dusty road below you there came in a carriage in the cool of the twilight—well, I can't joke about that—one whom he saw then for the first time. One whom—you knew. I only wanted to tell you how we are sitting in the place where the pitiful old story we all know began. He was sitting where you are, and I where I am. These are very likely the same chairs. It is certainly the same table, for here is the commencement of an attempt to carve my name."

"Oh! Where? Let me look? Poor Caspar, I wonder where he is!"

"And in the Kron-Prinz, where we will dine by-and-by, we two were introduced to Dick Menteith. Done your cutlet? Ah! well, I'll smoke again, and we will rest. Look here, Lily, we'll astonish those Burschen if you'll attend to my simple instructions. You say, audibly and distinctly, 'Prosit!' and drink when I make a remark to you in German, and keep your eye on them."

"All right!"

And Charlie took up his wine and said:

"Du steigt dir Was!"

"Prosit!" replied Lily, with decision, emptying her glass and smiling.

The process had the desired effect. The students started and stared, began a low and guttural gabble among themselves as to how much of their previous criticism might or might not have been understood,

and finally ordered three more half-liters of beer.

"They have had four glasses each," said Lily, with some slight anxiety.

"Oh, that's nothing! I've had eleven in the course of an evening, and argued metaphysics with Caspar afterwards."

"Well, you were a pig, and you sha'n't do it now you're with me."

"Oh, you'll find it's very good. I will be several pigs if I like."

After a long rest and desultory chatter, of which the above is a fair specimen, they left the garden and strolled back to the town, roaming from shop to shop, inspecting the old church, with the little stalls for small wares round its base, outside, lounging in the shady promenade where the chestnut-trees were, and making an excellent dinner later at "The Kron-Prinz." After dinner, when Lily had quite lost count of the cigars

her lord and master had smoked, that gentleman lit his n^{th}, and they started for the Castle. From its terrace they saw the day die gloriously, and the lights begin to glimmer down below, while Charlie told of many things we know already; and they walked up and down, watching the night come on and listening to the band playing selections from "Siegfried" in the neighbouring garden. Suddenly Lily said:

"Look — at the other end, leaning on the parapet, reading — there's someone else."

"Daresay."

"Let's go and look."

"All right, if it amuses you. Hullo—why, ah!—after all, we might have known this was the place to find him."

The stranger turned and looked at them. It was Caspar—Caspar, with little streaks of iron-grey about his temples and a little

corrugation between his brows. That was all the difference they saw. He shook hands, saying;

"I thought I should see this some day. Bless you, my children!"

"What the devil do you mean by ignoring our existence so long?" said Charlie with husky ferocity.

"I beg your pardon. I will not so err again.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, etc.

It is a beautiful place, Mrs. Charlie, isn't it?"

"Awfully. Weren't you reading just now?"

"Yes. An old friend of mine, this book. Don't you recognize it?"

"Yes—Oh, listen! What a beautiful thing they are playing now—what is it?"

"A Volkslied. The music is, however, by

Mendelssohn. They often play *Volks-lieder-pot-pourri* here. Hear the people applauding!"

"They have begun it again—oh I seem to know it somehow. Do you know what it is about, Mr. Rosenfeld?"

"Yes. Do you want the words? I can write them out and the tune for you if you like. It is;—

Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath
Dass man vom liebsten was man hat
Muss scheiden.

And so on. It's common enough."

"I should like to have it very much, please. I wonder why we like melancholy music so much, even when we have no reason to be more melancholy than usual ourselves? I wonder in the same way why one takes pleasure in reading a sad poem, or seeing a tragedy?"

"What pleasure or other profit some people

find in seeing tragedies I never could imagine, unless it be to decide a bet whether an actress's hair is her own, or her lace real. But I think the answer to your question is this: Some of us have what I may call an hereditary memory. One which is not only full of our own experience, but has filmy traces of everyone's, like the useless anatomical appendages, long ago worn out and left behind among the mastodons and monkeys, as far as any practical meaning in them goes. But they tell a tale. There they are—how got they there? So we may have rudimentary recollections. There is the sensitiveness to influences which just fail in putting you in mind of the sorrow people have suffered ages before you were born. You don't really recollect anything of your own to be sorry about, perhaps, but you feel vaguely that you share the heritage of sorrow of all the 'children of the world,' simply because you are one of them. And as the edge of sorrow is blunted by time

and the torturing fiend of recollection becomes at last a tender nursling of the mind even in one human life, how much more tender and soothing can that sadness become which is only the echo borne or the dream seen of the sorrow of the far-off long-dead men and women?"

"Isn't that rather like what we call sympathy?"

"If you prefer it to the philosophers' dictum that sympathy is the fear of like suffering in ourselves. You see, I've been so long in Germany now that I have got into the region of dream-speculation."

"What are you doing now, old fellow?" said Charlie.

"Well, I've taken to writing poetry, or what I call such. Verses, as Heine held, are perhaps as good an urn to put the ashes of one's life into as another—if it would only hold them."

"And do you mean to devote your life to that now?"

"My life? I do not know at all what to do with that. I wish somebody would take the article off my hands at a valuation, as a second-hand commodity largely damaged by the owner, so as to be of very little further pleasure or profit to him. But I don't suppose anybody wants it, and I am very much of anybody's opinion."

"Poor desolate old wandering Jew!" said Charlie, laying his hand on Caspar's shoulder, "come away down with us."

"Not now, thanks. There is going to be a thunderstorm up here to-night, I think, and I want to be in it. I'll see you to-morrow."

"Excuse us half a minute, Lily. Come to the other end of the platform, Caspar, I want to speak to you."

They walked along, while Lily stood look-

ing at the many twinkling lights of the town below.

"Look here," said Charlie, "will you give a straightforward answer to a question?"

"I'll make an effort."

"We will suppose, as is very likely, that there will be a thunderstorm by-and-by. Do you mean to walk about in the woods here till you get struck? I know a storm here in summer generally wipes out about six large trees."

"No, I don't. I don't hanker after a picturesque suicide. I'll take whatever comes now. It can't be worse than what is gone. I may as well live on as not. My own affairs are nothing to the countless misery of millions through all time to now. They bore it, and they bear it still. Why not I too? Poor old humanity is like Ixion, and as his wheel the daft world spins."

"Won't you come down with us, old man?"

"Not now. Go now, take your wife away. I'm very glad to see you both, but I can't yet talk wholesomely. When I can, I'll come and see you."

"Lily," said Charlie afterwards, "We must look after that fellow. He is an awfully friendless man. You see he has so many corners for people to hit themselves against, and get hurt. Work will do him good, but friends more."

"Leave him alone now. Some day he will find a girl who will understand him, and then he will be better."

"Can any girl ever stop his ears to the echo of old times?"

"Perhaps."

FINIS.

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